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EDWARD THE SEVENTH

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CLYDE VALLEY
THE HOSTILE SHORE

EDWARD THE SEVENTH

A Biography

by

CATHERINE GAVIN



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To My Father

PART ONE

ALBERT EDWARD

THE dear little Wales — sure the saddest of tales
Is the tale of the studies with which they are cramming thee;
In thy tuckers and bibs, handed over to Gibbs,
Who for eight years with solid instruction was ramming thee.

* * *

In Edinburgh next the poor noddle perplex
The gauntlet must run of each science and study,
Till the mixed streams of knowledge turned on by the college
Through the field of thy boy-brains runs shallow and muddy.

* * *

Dipped in grey Oxford mixture (lest *that* prove a fixture)
The poor lad's to be plunged in less orthodox Cam:
Where dynamics and statics, and pure mathematics
Will be piled on his brain's awful cargo of cram.

Where next the boy *may* go to swell the farrago
We haven't yet heard, but the Palace they're plotting in,
To Berlin, Jena, Bonn, he'll no doubt be passed on,
And drop in for a finishing touch, p'raps, at Göttingen.

'Gainst indulging the passion for this high-pressure fashion
Of Prince-training, *Punch* would uplift loyal warning;
Locomotives, we see, over-stoked soon may be,
Till the supersteamed boiler blows up one fine morning.

Punch,
September 24, 1859

CHAPTER I

BUCKINGHAM PALACE, 1841

ON the morning of November 9th, 1841, Queen Victoria was delivered of a son and heir. He was her second child, and the birth was so speedily accomplished that the officials who were obliged to attend it had to present themselves at Buckingham Palace with almost indecent haste. The Queen herself had spent some time at what was to be one of the chief tasks of her life — the perusal and signing of state documents — before returning to her room, and as the new Prince of Wales was being ushered into the world the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel came precipitately to the palace. The joybells were already ringing when the Archbishop of Canterbury arrived.

Ten months earlier, and shortly after the birth of the Princess Royal, the Queen had expressed the hope that she would not often be exposed to the 'hardship and inconvenience' of childbirth, but she had prudently added, 'God's will be done, and if He decrees that we are to have a great number of children, why we must try to bring them up as useful and exemplary members of society'. And the Queen, who was destined to become the mother of nine children, kept her word. To be good and useful members of society was the goal at which all were taught to aim, and none served a more painful or a more anxious apprenticeship to goodness than the infant whose birth now seemed to have crowned his mother's confident and successful life.

If the Queen, in after years, thought critically of the day when with little suffering and great praise she gave an heir to Britain, it must have been with the reflection that it was characteristic of her eldest son to have caused so much flurry. For Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, liked speed and enjoyed excitement, and on this first day of his life he had occasioned both.

He lay in his cradle and his mother lay in her bed, while beyond the palace windows the short November day drew to a foggy close, and his sister, the Princess Royal, who for just over a year had

been the heiress to the throne, was carried to her crib by candlelight.

In another room a young German sat writing: more candles (those extravagant candles, on which he proposed to write a memorandum requiring strict economies) were brought to light his page. For there was still much to read and much to sign: Victoria might have to rest for the most womanly, the most constitutional of reasons, but Prince Albert remained at his post. The hush of accomplishment, of unremitting toil, fell upon the palace, while the London streets rang with the news of the heir's birth as the bells had rung earlier in the day, and the gin palaces did a roaring trade.

There was a banquet at Guildhall, for it was the Lord Mayor's Show day, an appropriate birthday for one who was to enjoy colour and pageantry all his life, and it faded into such a London night as the child was to love in years to come: a night of that coarse and kindly intimacy of which the capital alone held the secret, when every sooty wall, every flare above the costers' barrows, every silent square and every ripple on the dark river seemed to whisper *London!*

The birth of Albert Edward (there was no doubt in the Queen's mind that his father's name must take precedence of that which her counsellors urged was the 'fine old Saxon name' of Edward) marked the end of the first phase in his parents' married life and perhaps also of Victoria's first phase as Queen. It was the end of the period of the royal couple's adjustment to marriage—that marriage in which the lady had been so palpably in love while the gentleman had seemed to accept the situation as his destiny, if not his doom. His mild affection had ripened to a dutiful love, her girlish raptures had deepened to a mood of sustained hero-worship as the causes of temporary friction between them became less important. At the time of her marriage in February 1840, Victoria was a young woman of twenty whose head had not unnaturally been turned by the dignities and adulation heaped on her since her accession in 1837. Even her periods of unpopularity, as at the time of the Lady Flora Hastings scandal, had only intensified the strong vein of egoism in her character. *She was the Queen*, that thought was the mainspring of her days, and the boy whom she had chosen for her husband was reminded in half a dozen ways that he would only be her consort. It was not by accident that even the note she sent him by hand on their wedding-morning was signed *Victoria R.*

But Victoria Regina had turned into the wife of Albert and lived

to please him. She had loved gaiety — parties and the opera and dancing till three in the morning — and he made her serious, living, like himself, for work, with Christmas and birthday festivities inside the family circle as the sole outlet for her love of good cheer. He assumed the direction of her political studies (his own being directed by Baron Stockmar) and where Lord Melbourne, her first Prime Minister, had brought to these same studies a certain nonchalance, a sophisticated humanity, Albert substituted a serious application reminiscent of their mutual uncle and mentor, Leopold, King of the Belgians. He was fortunate in his pupil, for the Queen's enormous stamina enabled her to endure the long hours of sedentary work which later took a heavy toll of his own vitality, and her Teutonic thoroughness, once it was properly awakened, was a match for his own. His studiousness she never could acquire, and he was as far from sharing in that flame of genius which made her a natural statesman, a flame inherited by only one of her children — the Prince of Wales.

It was perhaps the first misfortune of Albert Edward's life that he was the second child of his parents and not their eldest-born. The perfect marriage had been crowned after nine months by the birth of the perfect child, and Victoria, Princess Royal, never lost the pride of place in her parents' hearts. A brief display of royal resentment at the early repetition of pregnancy is reported in one of the letters of Prince Albert to his brother Ernest — one of the few occasions when Victoria was out of temper with the rather bewildered young man who had not yet attained his full stature of perfection. Albert Edward was welcomed for his constitutional significance rather than for himself.

This child was destined to inherit the greatest crown in the world, and from his earliest days his parents watched with trembling anxiety to see if he were fit to wear it. He was born of a union between the House of Hanover and the House of Coburg, and it sometimes seemed to his father and mother as if all the evil spirits of the two families menaced their son's cradle. There had been no such anxiety about the Princess Royal, either at her birth or later, and so far from yielding place to the Heir Apparent she was described by her mother, three weeks after his birth, as 'still *the* great pet amongst us all'. The baby, with his very large dark blue eyes and pretty little mouth, would be a pet too, if only he turned out to be

like his dearest Papa: it was unthinkable, it was unceasingly thought, that by some ill chance he might resemble his ancestors.

It is noteworthy that it was always supposed, with melancholy resignation, that the child would display the bad qualities of his forebears, and yet on both sides he inherited much that was good. The House of Coburg had become influential in Europe not by riches but by sheer intelligence, and he was descended from it not only through his father and grandfather, the reigning duke, but also through his maternal grandmother, the Duchess of Kent. Thanks to a series of judicious marriages, Coburg tentacles were spreading into the courts of Europe, and the *doyen* of the family, the elected King of the Belgians, held also the remarkable position of widowed-Prince-Consort-elect of Great Britain, which peculiarly fitted him for giving advice to Prince Albert. Application, sobriety, punctuality — all the dull copy-book virtues, practised to excess, were what had made the Coburg greatness. Yet across this impeccable inheritance there lay a stain, the memory of Albert's pretty frivolous mother, who had eloped rather than endure the boredoms of the ducal court and the libertinage of her husband. This lady, never mentioned at Buckingham Palace, nevertheless could not be excluded from the sources of her grandson's character.

The House of Hanover, whatever its defects, could not be called boring, for since the accession of the Elector George to the throne of Britain in 1714 a pageant of royal vice had been paraded before the incredulous eyes of the lieges. The wife of George I had been guilty of a tragic love for Count Koenigsmark, who was murdered on the eve of their elopement, and had spent more than a quarter of a century in a fortress prison when her husband sailed for Britain. George II and his son Frederick Prince of Wales were unnatural enemies, and his second surviving son, William Duke of Cumberland, earned the nickname of 'the Butcher' for his brutal treatment of the Jacobite rebels. The family of George III, himself insane for many years, surpassed their predecessors in iniquity. The seven sons, succinctly described by the Duke of Wellington as 'the damnedest millstone round the neck of any government', were profligates and gamblers: one of them was even suspected of incest. At the time of Albert Edward's birth two of these worthies, of whom his mother had been taught to think as her wicked uncles, had become respectable, and were tolerated as the Dukes of Sussex and Cambridge, but

the memory of her two predecessors on the throne was still unsavoury in Britain. George IV, after a long career of vice as Prince Regent, had led a scandalous divorce suit against the wife whom he had refused to admit to his coronation, nor was the spectacle of William IV, surrounded by his ten illegitimate children by Mrs. Jordan, calculated to restore the dignity of the monarchy. Guilt and madness, in the affrighted imagination of his parents, were Albert Edward's legacy from the House of Hanover.

Victoria and Albert, however, were like the sovereigns of the legend, who when the bad fairies have done their worst at the christening feast produce one good fairy whom they have kept in reserve to say a charm that counteracts the mischief, and that charm they thought they knew. If incipient libertinage lurked behind the very large blue eyes of the infant Duke of Cornwall (he was not created Prince of Wales till December 7th) it could and should be exorcized by work. Work had been Victoria's lot since the day when she discovered that she was the heir to the throne. Work had dispelled Albert's melancholy since he had realized that his mother was lost to him. By work, and by wholesome family affection, the infant's salvation would be accomplished. It was significant of this belief, as yet scarcely formed, that the court removed to Windsor a month after his birth. Buckingham Palace had already lost its charm for the Queen. She had not regained her strength very rapidly, and two months after her confinement was still troubled with lowness and depression of spirits: but in the cares of her 'awfully large nursery establishment' where the Princess Royal was teething, in gentle walks with Albert, in round games of an evening, she regained tranquillity.

She was a matron now, and under her rule Great Britain had entered a new phase of the nineteenth century. The first twenty years had been torn by the Napoleonic Wars and their aftermath. The second twenty had been a time of changing values, when the Prince Regent became George IV, Byron the libertine turned into the saviour of Greece, and the Duke of Wellington, idolized after Waterloo, was execrated by the crowd for his attitude to the Reform Bill. But in 1841 the national values seemed to crystallize. The wild young poets were all dead far from home, at Rome, in the bay of Spezzia, at Missolonghi, while Tennyson was ready to inherit an entirely English mantle from Wordsworth. The novels of the

Romantic Revival had been eclipsed by the realism, shot through with his own headlong genius, of Charles Dickens. The material results of the Industrial Revolution were laying the fortunes of the middle classes, and England seemed mercifully free of any continental entanglements. The King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who was one of Albert Edward's sponsors, and in whose honour 'Der Landesvater' was played at the christening banquet, was only the unremarkable monarch of a meritorious German state, and was decidedly less noticed during the celebrations than the child's great-uncle, Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg, who peppered Bos, Prince Albert's pet greyhound, while out shooting, an accident for which King Leopold was 'extremely sorry' and which reduced Lord Melbourne to despair or so he said. Prussian King and Coburg princeling, they were equally unimportant to the British public, settling itself for twenty years of comfortable progress as the court settled down after the christening and Victoria reported to her uncle that 'little Albert behaved so well'. She had nothing left to desire but that the child (it must surely be everybody's fervent prayer) might 'resemble his angelic dearest Father in every, every respect, both in body and mind'.

Thus 1842 began, destined to be an important year, with Chartist riots disturbing the Midlands while at the other side of the world British forces marched into Afghanistan and captured Kabul.

The Queen could not remain a *Hausfrau*. She handed over her nursery to a governess appointed in March, Sarah, Lady Lyttelton, and resumed the cares of State. This lady, whom he engagingly called 'Laddles', was an extremely sympathetic observer of the Prince of Wales. His mother, in her correspondence, consistently decried him in favour of the Princess Royal ('I really think few children are as forward as she is. She is quite a dear little companion. The Baby is sadly backward, but also grown, and very strong'), but though he was certainly a backward child, slow to talk and rather undersized, Lady Lyttelton appreciated from the first that he was also brave and generous. When he was two and a half years old he sat on her knee at a military review held in Windsor Great Park in honour of the Czar of Russia, 'in ecstasies till the firing, when he behaved most prettily. It was quite near. "I afraid! Soldiers go popping! I cry!" with the most touching countenance and bursting heart; but he conquered himself completely, did not cry a drop and grew quite

calm before it ceased — a real bit of courage on principle'. She found in general that a 'childish dignity very pretty to witness characterized all his movements in public' as if the boy already understood that he was royal, and the observed of all. That his courage was not assumed was proved on occasions more personally dangerous than the review, as when his pony Arthur ran away with him. Strapped into his Spanish saddle, and violently jolted, he kept a tight rein and showed no sign of fear after his first loud cry for help. 'Guelph courage' was an inheritance from the House of Hanover, and his mother had her share of it, but — Prince Albert tormented himself — would he have moral courage too?

Moral courage could be inculcated by education, both religious and secular, and while the Prince was still in petticoats his father was hard at work drawing up a comprehensive programme of instruction. In this he was assisted by the Baron Stockmar, a German doctor who had been for twenty-five years the *éminence grise* of the House of Coburg. He had been near Prince Leopold during his marriage to Princess Charlotte, and when her death in childbed had balked Leopold from becoming the British Consort, Stockmar had followed his fortunes to the Belgian throne. During the years of Victoria's minority he had waited in the background, helping Leopold to form the tastes of the all-important nephew Albert, and now he was a powerful influence at her court. A third little Coburg awaited his ministrations, and he and Prince Albert covered sheets of foolscap with observations on the education of the future sovereign. One of their chief aims was to eradicate any lingering traces of the Hanoverians from the child's character, although from the chaff of his arid pages Stockmar did winnow one grain of common sense — 'whatever the faults of these Princes were, they were considered by the public as true English faults'.

But Prince Albert cared nothing for public opinion, and as he had sworn before his marriage to remain 'a true German, Coburger and son of Gotha' he was not impressed by the necessity to make his son an Englishman.

Baron Stockmar personally appointed the three governesses who were to impart English, French and German to the boy, who was also to take lessons, by way of relaxation, in dancing, drawing and painting.

German was the language of the family circle, and he retained

a definite guttural accent throughout his life. When he was two years and three months old Lady Lyttelton wrote: '[He] talks much more English than he did, though he is not articulate like his sister, but rather babyish in accent. He understands a little French and says a few words, but is altogether backward in language, very intelligent, and generous and cool-tempered, with a few passions and stampings occasionally; most exemplary in politeness and manner, bows and offers his hand beautifully besides saluting *à la militaire* - all unbidden'.

He was handicapped in his early lessons, as in his later, by the fact that the Princess Royal was naturally studious. Although there was only one year of difference in their ages, she far outstripped him in book-learning. His parents made constant comparisons between them, and his mistakes were punished or laughed at. He was five years old when he asked his mother, 'Pray, Mama, is not a pink the female of a carnation?' and the compassionate Lady Lyttelton commented, 'Poor darling! I am sorry he said it, for he got such shouts of laughter that he was quite abashed'.

His affection for his sister never suffered from this partial treatment. Another letter written by the governess demonstrates his loving nature. 'His sister [Royal] has lately been often in disgrace. His little attentions on the sad occasions have been very nice. Never losing sight of her through a longish imprisonment in her own room, and stealing to the door to give a kind message or tell a morsel of pleasant news, his own toys quite neglected and his lovely face quite pale until the disgrace was over. And such truth! He inherits all his mother's.'

Here, then, was a little boy with great natural qualities. Loving and unselfish, generous and polite, he was also intelligent and truthful. Of such a nature, rightly educated and guided, something noble might be made, and Prince Albert desired nothing less than nobility for his eldest son. His proceedings, however, were a fresh proof of the frequency with which desire doth outrun performance.

The Prince, in fact, was the shadow over Albert Edward's childhood. More sententious than Mr. Fairchild, famous in contemporary literature, more possessive than Mr. Barrett of Wimpole Street, he brooded over the royal nursery, whercof the master-key never left his keeping. Papa's goodness, Papa's omniscience, were daily held up to the child by his infatuated Mama, with the approval of Papa

himself. He took the bloom off everything, and the magic out of all childish illusions: there is no more subtly painful story of childhood than Albert Edward's account of the conjuror who came to Balmoral:

'He cut to pieces Mama's pocket-handkerchief,' said the little boy, 'then darned it and ironed it so that it was as entire as ever; he then fired a pistol and caused five or six watches to go through Gibbs' head; *but Papa knows how all those things are done.*'

CHAPTER II

THE 'VICTORIA AND ALBERT', 1847

IN 1843 an anonymous pamphlet considerably exercised the Prince Consort. It was entitled, 'Who Shall Educate the Prince of Wales?' and though it contained very little but old-fashioned saws, and dicta based on Fénelon's *Télémaque*, the Prince and Stockmar gave it their close attention. Lord Melbourne had already expressed his opinions, for three weeks after the child's birth he had written to the Queen, 'Be not over solicitous about education. It may be able to do much, but not so much as is expected from it. It may mould and direct the character, but it rarely alters it'.

There were, as Lord Melbourne would have been the first to appreciate, other influences which combined to form a boy's character as well as intensive study. During the years when even Baron Stockmar had to admit that the child was too young for the classics and philosophy Albert Edward profited by a simple, wholesome nursery routine and by exceptional opportunities for meeting grown-up people and for travel. People and places — these were the two things that were going to interest him most, and between his sixth and his tenth years he began to enjoy them both.

Very soon he was promoted from being the Princess Royal's little brother to being the big brother of the pretty infants who joined them in the nursery. Princess Alice was born in 1843, Prince Alfred in 1844, and Princess Helena two years later. He was 'Bertie' to those little people, to his Papa and Mama, and to a whole host of relatives, old and young, who protested an interest in his welfare, but to the tall gentlemen, immensely old and learned, who came from London to see Mama and bowed to him as respectfully as he bowed to them, and to the crowds who cheered him when his travels began, he was the Prince of Wales.

Although he knew, of course, that he was royal — his mother's sovereign state and the subservience of lackeys had intimated that to him since his infancy — he did not fully apprehend what it might mean to be the Prince of Wales until he began the series of voyages on the yacht *Victoria and Albert* which introduced him to his mother's

subjects beyond London. He observed that he had titles for all occasions, which were produced at need — it was as the Duke of Cornwall that he was lifted up to salute the crowds which came to see their little landlord when the royal yacht entered Falmouth Harbour in September 1846, and it was as the Prince of Wales that he bowed to Welshmen north of the Bristol Channel. The tiny boy with his white sailor suit and anxious expression delighted the British public, which reserves its tenderest admiration for the very young or the very old. To him, now, was transferred the sentimental adulation which had been given to his mother, when as an eighteen-year-old queen she had appeared first to her people. In an age where *Oliver Twist*, *Little Nell* and *Tiny Tim* were moving the literate public to tears, the figure of the little Prince, so young and fresh, still unconscious of his tremendous destiny, was most agreeably affecting.

The Prince Consort was quite shrewd enough to observe this. It was the child who shared with his mother the plaudits of Englishmen, and not her husband, for the tall young German had never touched the hearts of his wife's subjects. If he had been a good shot and rider to hounds, an affable leader of society, and if he had even, from time to time and very discreetly, shown an interest in some pretty unroyal lady, they would have liked him for his humanity. But Victoria's plaster saint never received more than the homage of duty from those who did not realize till long after how faithfully he had laboured for his adopted country. And even if they had realized it, they might still have been tempted to call the Prince a Swot.

After the expeditions to Cornwall and Wales, the royal family visited Scotland in two successive years. In 1847 their headquarters were at Ardvreikie, but in 1848 the Queen purchased the old castle of Balmoral on Deeside, which, reconstructed during the next few years, was to become her favourite retreat. Once again the little Prince, or rather the Duke of Rothesay and Baron Renfrew, was greatly admired, the more especially as he wore the Highland dress which was not only a tribute to Scotland but a reminder that the Stuart blood had mingled with that of the Hanoverians nearly two hundred years before. But the Highland dress had to be laid aside next year, when the *Victoria and Albert* went to Cork and Belfast as well as to Dublin. He had no Irish title when he arrived in the distressful country, but to ease its distresses he was created Earl of Dublin. The Queen said so, and people cheered louder than

ever — the little boy noted wonderingly that it was very easy to be popular in any other place but home.

But of all his early progresses, none was so successful as his first state journey through London — real state this, for Mama did not accompany him, and the Prince of Wales, her heir, was the most important person in the royal barge, which conveyed him and the Princess Royal from Westminster to the City. The occasion was prosaic enough, being the opening of the Coal Exchange, and nothing could have been more prosaic than the Prince Consort, who watchfully escorted his children, but about the two youthful figures sailing down the dark river there was a glamour that recalled a younger England, and the water-feasts of the Tudors and Stuarts. The bargees, and the oyster women, and the city crowds cheered the Prince of Wales that day, the Prince who was in his own London which then and always took him to its friendly heart.

For long periods at a time, however, he was destined to be out of his native city. In 1845 his parents purchased Osborne House in the Isle of Wight, a pleasant and healthful retreat from which the Queen was enabled, as she said, to keep an eye on the transactions at Portsmouth and Spithead, and where the blue, calm seas reminded the Consort of the Bay of Naples. The royal children spent much of their youth at Osborne: after the purchase of Balmoral they had four homes, including Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace: how happy such fortunate children ought to be! Once at least they migrated to Osborne in circumstances other than fortunate, in the spring of the tempestuous year 1848, when the Queen was confined with the Princess Louise, and London appeared to her, in her delicate state of health, to be less than salubrious. For in the other capitals of Europe there were *émeutes* and bread-riots and barricades: the French royal family was in flight, and their majesties of Prussia and Austria were in serious trouble and hastily signing constitutions. But the British climate being unpropitious to organized revolution, the Commune fizzled out in England, and presently the royal children might return to the mainland and forget that for a few weeks they had been quasi-refugees.

The Prince was approaching his seventh birthday and was making contacts with notable individuals, as well as with crowds. Hitherto his impressions had been confined to his family circle, and as the great educational trap of his father and Stockmar had not yet fully

closed its iron jaws upon him, these impressions had in the main been agreeable. But in the beginning of 1844 an unwholesome wind, indicative of the great tempests to come, blew across the royal nursery.

The Prince Consort's father, an old gentleman of doubtful morals, whom the Queen had met only twice, in 1836 and on her marriage, died on January 29th. His daughter-in-law wrote to tell her uncle that he must henceforth be a father to her and Albert, those 'poor, bereaved, heartbroken children. To describe all that we have suffered, all that we do suffer, would be difficult; God has heavily afflicted us: we feel crushed, overwhelmed, bowed down by the loss of one who was so deservedly loved, I may say adored, by his children and family'. Tears were a relief, she found, and her tears and Albert's flowed luxuriously. The orphan commanded himself sufficiently to write to his brother Ernest, the new Duke, whom he had recently informed that he must leave 'to perish in immorality,' with every expression of brotherly goodwill, and added, 'Our poor little children do not know why we cry, and they ask us why we are in black'.

Poor little children indeed! This was the first time that the dark wing of over-indulged grief swept across Albert Edward's life, but it was by no means the last. For nearly sixty years it was to be his duty to assist at the transports of his mother's woe — the hypochondriacal weeping which flowed so freely, not only on that terrible occasion in 1861, but at the death of every one of her enormous connexion of relatives, in fact and in law. It is hard to tell how far the Queen reflected in this the tendency of her Age and how far she set the fashion, for a morbid dwelling on all the ceremonial of death was prevalent throughout middle-class Britain at that time; but it is certain that no respect for the nerves and cheerfulness of her children ever restrained the Queen from finding relief in tears. The Prince of Wales was not very old when he became accustomed to darkened rooms, black clothing and the swollen eyes of those about him: he was awed, he was sorry, and as he grew older he was most profoundly bored.

From this first debauch of grief, however, the Queen recovered fairly quickly, and by midsummer was able to receive an alarmingly distinguished visitor, the Emperor Nicholas I of Russia. The King of Saxony was invited to Windsor at the same time, and magnificent entertainments were given in honour of the guests. Albert Edward,

who had scarcely begun to learn what it was to be the Prince of Wales, formed some idea of what it was to be the sovereign. For his Mama, her sober everyday dress laid aside, shone forth in a majesty which could not be eclipsed by the approach of Prince Alfred's birth, and left the quiet family apartments for the splendours of the Waterloo Chamber, blazing with gold plate and the trophies of war. The children attended a Review in the Park where they saw their mother saluted by her soldiers; they saw the cortège set out for the races or for the opera; they did not know that every time the Emperor left the castle their parents trembled lest 'some Pole might make an attempt'. Happily the obstreperous folk of Poland did not follow their tyrant to Windsor Great Park, and the visit concluded with the Imperial gift of the Grand Cross of St. Andrew to the Prince of Wales. It was the first foreign decoration offered to a prince who was to make himself a supreme authority on Orders and their wearing, bringing to this study all the precision and love of etiquette of his grandfather, the Duke of Kent.

The King of Saxony contented himself with playing with the children, thereby giving them a few hours of pleasure instead of medals and ribbons.

When Prince Alfred's birth was safely accomplished the Queen received again, and King Louis Philippe came across from France. He too praised and played with the children and instead of the nightmare of assassination brought with him only the fears of his family that he would eat too much. Yet four years later the Emperor Nicholas was still secure on his throne, Poles or no Poles, when King Louis Philippe and his tribe came hurrying across the Channel to exile at Claremont. Albert Edward was older then: he perceived that kings might lose their crowns if they ran counter to the will of the people. It was an apt illustration of his father's elementary instructions in constitutional history.

The arrival of the Orleans family provided him with a new set of playmates, for Louis Philippe's grandchildren were more or less about his own age. The Comte de Paris, who should have succeeded to the throne, was ten years old, the Duc de Chartres was eight, and them, with their other Orleans cousins, the Queen characterized as 'unmanageable,' but they were new and exotic relatives for the young Prince, who was more accustomed to write laborious thank-you letters to his connexions (particularly his Belgian cousins, Leopold,

Philippe and Charlotte) than to play with them. At this time there were two sets of claimants to the French throne, for the Orleans had followed the Bourbons into exile, and the Duc de Bordeaux, the Legitimist pretender, was sometimes to be seen in London. But Albert Edward knew that French politics were muddled and muddy, and that since the affair of the Spanish marriages in 1846 the hopes of an *entente cordiale* were at an end.

He was beginning to understand, in a vague and childish fashion, something of the play and interplay of character and motives that went on so far above his head. When he played with Paris and Chartres, he was learning something of how a French boy's mind worked: he had very little opportunity of learning the same about an English boy. He might only play with other children when they were royal, or kinsfolk, but in any case his father thought he was too fond of play.

Some few years later Charles Dickens created a governess who required her charges, for the formation of their lips and accents, to repeat the words 'Papa, Potatoes, Poultry, Prunes and Prisms'. The Consort, himself a male edition of Mrs. General, also had an alliterative nostrum: his was 'Restraint and Reading'. This was just what his son needed, the wild boy, the idle boy: Restraint and Reading! That he might enjoy both these blessings in unlimited quantities, the Prince of Wales, at eight years old, was put under the care of a tutor.

The choice of this tutor, of course, gave Prince Albert and Stockmar furiously to think. The former had had a beloved tutor in Coburg, on whom he had lavished the affection which should have been bestowed on his absconding mother. But he had chosen to forget this, and was not anxious to engage a young and sympathetic tutor for his son. His first choice fell on the great Dr. Liddell, the Dean of Westminster School, and it was rather an affront when the lexicographer declined the honour. A less distinguished scholar was recommended for the post in the person of the Reverend Henry Birch, who took up his duties in the spring of 1849.

In spite of his auspicious name, Mr. Birch spared the rod, for like Lady Lyttelton before him, this young man was subjugated by the charm of his pupil. Perceiving that the child had no aptitude for books, he was at pains not to disgust him with them or to punish him for his failures, but to interest him by simple cheerful methods

and comprehensible explanations. The natural result was that Albert Edward soon loved his kind tutor dearly, for Mr. Birch exactly filled the gap between his preoccupied, critical parents and his little sisters and brother. Here was an older person, old enough to give a sense of protection and security, who could be gay and affectionate like a child, and who could play as well as work. The Prince of Wales had a *Schwärm* for Mr. Birch, even as his father for Herr Florschütz at Rosenau long ago.

Now the Prince Consort, that pillar of Protestantism, expected a positively Jesuitical surveillance to be exercised upon his son. He would have liked the tutor to submit to him daily reports, with every fault minutely chronicled, and no success inordinately praised. This Mr. Birch quite failed to do. His reports were infrequent and brief, and much too approbatory, which in itself was unsatisfactory; moreover the dark core of jealousy in Prince Albert's heart told him quite correctly that his boy was giving to another man the love which his own system had distracted from himself. It was not to be borne, and after a respectable interval had elapsed the Prince dispensed with the services of Mr. Birch, giving as his official reason disapproval of the tutor's attitude to the Church Catechism.

The Prince of Wales was told that his friend must leave him. With a bursting heart he lived through the last days, finding some outlet for his grief in the penning of affectionate notes and the preparation of little presents. The letters were slipped under Mr. Birch's door, the gifts beneath his pillow, for the child had learned already to curb his natural spontaneity and make no demonstration which might provoke a scene. It was 1851, the year of the wonderful Exhibition, and Albert Edward, at ten, might be thought a most fortunate little boy with so many pleasures at command: but he had undergone one experience which the Crystal Palace could not efface, he had suffered his first parting and lost his first friend.

CHAPTER III

WINDSOR CASTLE, 1851

IN 1851 the number of the Prince's brothers and sisters had been increased by two, Princess Louise having been born in 1848 and Prince Arthur, named for the Duke of Wellington, in 1850. With the birth of Prince Leopold in 1853 and Princess Beatrice in 1857, the group of royal children was complete, and it can safely be said that none of its junior members was as interesting as the three oldest. The second son Alfred, later created Duke of Edinburgh, was destined to marry the only daughter of the Czar Alexander II, a match which, while brilliant, had no dynastic significance except that through its issue another Coburg tentacle was flung into the Balkans by the marriage of the Duke's daughter Marie to the future King of Rumania. The Duke of Edinburgh subsequently succeeded to the Dukedom of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and went to live in Germany. The five younger brothers and sisters made undistinguished marriages — the only dynastic result being the marriage of Princess Beatrice's daughter Victoria to Alfonso XIII of Spain — and they were in themselves undistinguished persons: mildly efficient, devoted sons, rather gifted in art and music, dutifully interested in the Services, and amiable, sentimental, devoted daughters. As often happens with the children of young parents, the eldest-born seemed to have a monopoly of the brains and beauty which petered out in the youngest of the large family. Victoria, Albert Edward and Alice were the three who inherited most from their very talented parents — for the Queen and her Consort were a formidable combination, having youth and love to add to great gifts of intellect and character. It was in their later years, when so much of their vitality was diverted to public affairs, that they were incapable of handing on to their younger children the individuality so marked in the eldest.

With the two sisters who were the first playmates of his nursery days, Albert Edward was on terms of the deepest affection. In later life politics estranged him for a time from the Princess Royal, but no shadow ever came between him and the Princess Alice until her early death at Hesse-Darmstadt. He was proud of his sisters as their

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early girlhood revealed their exceptional promise, and so were the parents who could see beyond a doubt that their elder daughters had inherited many of their father's gifts. It was interesting to see how different these gifts might be.

Of all his children, the Princess Royal, his 'Vicky', was nearest to Prince Albert's heart, and the one who most closely resembled himself. All his boyish enthusiasms for philosophy and science, all his ardour for study, all his interest in music and painting were in her reproduced in a new and enchantingly feminine form. As she passed into adolescence, the father perceived that her developing brain might have been made for Stockmar's instructions. It was a thousand pities that she was not the heir to the throne. So he trained her for the day when she might share a throne, and imbued her with the liberal principles which were in due course to come into such violent conflict with the military autocracy of Bismarck, a conflict which helped to pave the way to the great quarrel between the countries of her birth and her marriage.

But in 1851 the Consort had his daughter close by his side, delighting in the fresh mind which shared his interests as Victoria's never had. For Victoria was the mirror, the idolator, admiring her husband's talents from afar, applauding his technique at the organ, his knowledge of mural painting and ecclesiastical architecture, but having no real desire to share in these things. *She was the Queen*, and when it came to a sharing of life work, it was he who had to share hers. But Vicky was different.

Alice was different too. If she had not Vicky's brains, neither had she Vicky's self-will. She was a model daughter, gentle and unselfish, sustained by a strong evangelical faith very like the Protestantism professed by the youthful Albert when he took his first communion at Coburg. She had inherited his piety, the piety which in his case was tintured, as sometimes happens to German Lutheranism, with moral philosophy, but Princess Alice had no formal philosophical training. In her feminine spirit, saddened by many sorrows in her adult years, evangelical piety turned to something very like emotional mysticism. It flourished at her little Grand-Ducal court: it was transmitted to her daughter Alix, the future Empress of Russia, and helped to pave the way to Rasputin and the cellar at Ekaterinburg.

Such were the gifts which Albert gave to his daughters.

But what had the Prince of Wales got? He had got an Angel for a Papa, that was plain, but did he show any signs of appreciating it? Did he cultivate incipient pinions, so to speak, or hanker for a halo? His agitated Mama perceived that Bertie was neither pious, musical nor absorbed in constitutional history. His compositions, even his diaries, were short and scrappy, betraying no talent for memoranda. Her fondest wish, that he should resemble his angelic Papa in every respect, seemed likely to be frustrated.

The Queen entirely failed to see that the boy took after herself as she had been in her youth — in the three short years between her accession and her marriage. The solid happiness of her life had come after, to be sure, but there had been a time between 1837 and 1840 when the whole world had seemed, to a girl emancipated from the schoolroom to a throne, to be made up of cheering crowds, fountains playing, the opera, Court balls, jewels, and the homage of great men. In that bright dawn of her Age, Victoria had had a gift *for people* which was to be in eclipse for many years, almost until the evening of her days. Her son had her quick intuition, her straightforward interest in humanity, and her sense of dignity, but he had something which neither she nor his father had or understood — he had charm.

Bertie was everybody's friend. Mr. Birch and Lady Lyttelton, Lady Augusta Bruce who was in attendance on his grandmother, his brothers and sisters, the servants, even the crowds who had cheered him on his travels, all fell under the spell of that rich and gregarious personality. Only his parents thought his infectious good spirits required to be put into a moral quarantine. His charm, in fact, was so much a suspect quality that his mother feared he had got it from the Hanoverians.

The Queen, who was not given to introspection, did not realize that she herself was emulating the hated Hanoverians in her attitude to her eldest son. The quarrels of George II and Frederick Prince of Wales were only the most notorious example of the ill-feeling which had persisted in every generation between the Hanoverian monarchs and their heirs. Jealousy may have been at the root of it: the fear of the older generation that the younger is over-eager to wear the crown. Perhaps there was a streak of that unnatural cruelty which was the Brunswick inheritance. At all events not even the sentimentalities of Windsor could disguise the fact that as he grew older the

Queen grew more incapable of getting on well with her son. And her Hanoverian attitude cut both ways. For a number of years she had been on bad terms with her own mother, having been prejudiced against her by her governess, Baroness Lehzen, and by the folly of the Duchess of Kent's own conduct with Sir John Conroy. Albert had brought them together again, and the estrangement was conveniently forgotten — at least by the Queen, who exhorted her own children to obey the Fifth Commandment.

Albert, the Coburger, could not be suspected of the Hanoverian vices, but jealousy does not confine itself to a particular family, and jealousy certainly tainted the Prince's attitude to his son. He realized that he himself was the man in the background, and while up to a point he was content that this should be so, he was man enough to wish that he might be acknowledged in public as the head of his wife, which she so ecstatically called him in private. But that, he knew, would never be. Even the title of Prince Consort was not conferred upon him till 1857, and a much greater title was reserved for his son. Besides this jealousy of a son bound to rise to greater heights than his own there was the jealousy of a shy diffident nature for one that was cheerful and engaging. The Prince's gloomy manners had helped to stifle his popularity. It was said that on entering a room he would sidle along two of the walls before screwing himself up to extend his hand to the guest. This was shyness indeed, and it was at the bottom of the coldness, so unfavourably noted, with which he received the victorious generals of the Crimea. How could a man so handicapped compete with a friendly, interested boy?

Yet in 1851 Prince Albert seemed to have risen above his handicaps and to have reached his apotheosis in the Great Exhibition. This spectacle had been his own conception, designed to honour the Arts and Sciences, and he had followed up his first outbursts of inspiration with two years of steady organization which made the Exhibition not only a success but a paying proposition, and enormously enhanced his prestige in the eyes of the public men who sat on his committees. The Queen, convinced that now her husband's great gifts of heart and mind were evident to all, wandered happily through the Crystal Palace, as it was later called, with her heir, in his Highland dress, trotting by her side. His enjoyment was scarcely so profound as hers, for after every visit he was expected to write essays on what he had seen, and fearsome special reports to Baron

Stockmar. But his parents regarded those visits as holidays, and warned him that he must make a compensatory effort to work well for his new tutor, when Mr. Frederick Gibbs assumed that position in the autumn.

Mr. Gibbs was a man after Prince Albert's own heart. Fully versed in the art of memoranda, he peppered the anxious father with just the sort of reports that were required, with none of the faults omitted and a great deal of dubiety concerning the pupil's powers of concentration. Mr. Gibbs was a Fellow of Trinity, and quite clever enough to see at once that the Prince of Wales was no scholar, but he agreed with Prince Albert that work, and more work, was the only remedy — as if, being set preparation which should occupy twelve hours of his day, Bertie could scarcely fail to study for six. He was a stern man, and yet the boy, who had so much need of affection, became fond of him, while Mr. Gibbs, almost against his better judgment, became fond of the boy.

Prince Albert had other cares besides those connected with the Great Exhibition. On December 2nd, 1851, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte carried out a *coup d'état* in Paris which led to his assuming, a little later, the title of Emperor, and British sentiment was somewhat agitated by the creation of a military dictatorship on the other side of the Channel. Prince Albert, whose political power was growing, profited by the occasion to manipulate the defeat of Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, who was antipathetic to the royal couple. Such an action required much thought and preparation, for Lord Palmerston was very clever, and besides the domestic situation, the news from the Continent was every day more absorbing, and required the Prince to be at his desk before daybreak. 'Albert really becomes a terrible man of business' complained the Queen in February 1852. 'I think it takes a little off from the gentleness of his character and makes him so preoccupied. I grieve over all this, as I cannot enjoy these things, much as I interest myself in *general* European politics, but I am every day more convinced that *we women*, if we are to be *good women*, and *feminine* and *amicable* and *domestic*, are *not fitted to reign*, or at least it is *contre gré* that they drive themselves to the *work* which it entails.'

This was a favourite attitude of the Queen during her husband's lifetime, but it was conspicuously absent from the forty years of her reign after his death, when she refused to share any of the work which

she professed to dislike with the man who stood nearest to her and to the Crown.

In spite of his laborious days Prince Albert never relaxed his supervision of his eldest son's education. He had other sons by this time: Alfred was destined for the Navy, since no royal family is complete without its Sailor Prince, and baby Arthur, the godson of the Iron Duke, might well adorn the Army. He had hopes and plans for all of them, but only for Bertie was a devastating programme of work reserved — work which should stuff his head with facts about every subject under the sun, and which should invade even his leisure. For the brief hours spared from Caesar and Homer were to be occupied in turning over drawings and prints, in listening while poetry or improving prose was read aloud to him, and for further relaxation his father would take him to hear Demosthenes, Aeschylus and Cicero recited at Eton on the 4th of June. 'I can see his poor bored little face now,' said one sympathetic observer, many years after.

His classical studies were entrusted to Mr. Charles Tarver, who, like Mr. Gibbs, remained his tutor for many years. Any gaps which these two gentlemen might have left in his education were filled by a number of visiting masters, or external lecturers, none of whom succeeded in holding his interest for very long at a time. When he was fifteen he took a hunted kind of pleasure in Michael Faraday's lectures on Natural Science, and none whatsoever in Mr. Ellis's disquisitions on Political Economy. He shared the latter course with the Princess Royal, and the lecturer sadly noted the interest and ability of the girl and the inattention of the boy. For Bertie was almost fuddled with learning by that time, and had reached saturation point.

The sane course, of alternating study with various forms of relaxation, was disdained by his mentors. Prince Albert occasionally rode, and more occasionally still arranged a shooting excursion, but he had no real interest in outdoor sports and none at all in games. Nor had Bertie much natural aptitude for these recreations. He was still small, but strong enough: it was an inborn clumsiness that made games difficult for him, and of course he had no opportunities of playing football or cricket, which would at least have taught him something of the team spirit. Now and again he looked wistfully across the river to the playing-fields of Eton, where his contemporaries were enjoying themselves. He never knew what it was to play

with other boys as their equal, to give and take punishment for transgressions of the schoolboy code. But from time to time he was allowed to entertain hand-picked parties of Eton boys to tea.

It is impossible not to find prototypes of Prince Albert in the pages of Victorian fiction. He was Mr. Fairchild, he was Mrs. General: in Dickens again, he was at once Mr. Gradgrind in his insistence on facts and Mr. M'Choakumchild in his insistence on study. His attitude to his son's tea-parties was reminiscent of that painful passage in *Great Expectations* where Miss Havisham orders Pip to play — ‘“There, there!” with an impatient movement of the fingers of her right hand; “play, play, play!”’ Like Miss Havisham, he supervised the play so forbiddingly that his son or any of the guests might well have shared Pip's desperate idea ‘of starting round the room in the assumed character of Mr. Pumblechook's chaise-cart’. Or again, he was like the father of Eric (or Little by Little) who so grotesquely intervened to protect his son from the horseplay of his fellow pupils. For it was to protect Bertie that his father never left him alone with other boys, even such unimpeachable boys as a young Gladstone, a young Cadogan, a young Stanley or a young Wood. Thus the tea-parties came to their sedate conclusion: Papa returned to his desk and the Eton boys to the greater freedom of school, while their host meandered disconsolately about the terraces of Windsor until Mr. Gibbs or Mr. Tarver came to hale him back to his books. What more did he want? Had he not his brothers and sisters to play with? And was he not almost too old to play?

He was nearly thirteen years old when Britain formed her first continental alliance and entered upon her first war (exclusive of punitive expeditions, which were necessary and frequent) for a generation.

After a dispute between Russia and Turkey on the custody of the Holy Places in Palestine, the Czar had occupied the Danubian Principalities, and war broke out between him and the Sultan. In March 1854 Britain and France signed a treaty of alliance and declared war on Russia. The man who had led Britain to victory at Waterloo had died two years before, and he, as one or two people remembered, had been fond of saying, ‘You cannot have a little war’. It was nearly forty years since the Duke of Wellington had defeated Napoleon, and now, by an ironical turn of fate, it was the Emperor's nephew and namesake who was to be Britain's ally in a war against

Russia. A nation of optimists saw no reason why this should not be a 'little' war, speedily won.

The Queen herself hoped that Austria and Prussia would march with Britain and France, in which case the war would 'only be a local one'. But these hopes were doomed to disappointment, and in a curiously ominous way. It was the King of Prussia, that Frederick William IV who was Bertie's godfather, who proved recalcitrant.

Now Prince Albert was the friend and champion of Prussia. Lord Aberdeen commented that his 'views were generally sound and wise, with one exception, which was his violent and incorrigible German nationalism. He goes all lengths with Prussia'. At the outbreak of the Crimean War it became quite evident that Prussia would not go all lengths with Britain. For the King wrote a letter giving some very unsatisfactory reasons for his abstention from the war: he would not side with Russia, whose arrogant and wicked conduct was the cause of the trouble, but neither would he side against her, for Russia had done his own country no harm. Then came a startling announcement: he was about to sign an alliance with the Emperor of Austria, 'thus welding', he wrote, 'for the entire duration of the war, the whole of Central Europe into a unity, comprising seventy-two million people and easily able to put one million men into the field. And yet, most gracious Queen, I do not take up a defiant position on the strength of this enormous power, but I trust in the Lord's help and my own sacred right'. The King concluded with the bland assurance that Duty, Conscience and Tradition forbade him to draw the sword against Old England.

It was the authentic voice of Prussia — that blend of blackmail and hypocrisy — which the disgusted world was to hear again and again in the next hundred years.

The Queen was equal to the occasion. Her husband was unrivalled in the preparation of memoranda, but she was supreme in her own sphere of writing letters of State, and her reply to the King of Prussia was a masterpiece of discernment and firmness. 'What am I to think', she asked, 'if after England and France with courageous readiness have taken upon themselves this immense responsibility, sacrifice and danger, Your Majesty is now mainly considering the erection of a barrier of seventy-two millions of men between them and that Power against whose encroachment the European interest is to be defended? What am I to say to the threat uttered against

the *West* as well as against the *East* and to your even asking from the West gratitude for "the enormous advantage" that you do not, into the bargain, yourself join in attacking it!!'

She had put her unerring finger on the weakness of the Prussian case. For the time being, Prussia went down in her opinion and France went up. Albert Edward, hearing in his schoolroom the repercussions of these things, could not fail to be stirred by the new martial air to which life was set, and to develop a new interest in France, which he had hitherto known only as the country from which so many exiles had come. His mother's nerves were excited by this, her first declaration of war on the grand scale. The thrilling departure of her 'beautiful Guards' was only eclipsed by 'a splendid and never-to-be-forgotten sight — the sailing of our noble Fleet for the Baltic'. She led the squadron out to sea herself in the yacht *Fairy*, and thought of Queen Elizabeth at Tilbury Fort, and of Boadicea and the Roman legions, so that her elder children caught fire from her, and cheered for Mama and the French Emperor her Ally!

It was the second attempt at an *entente cordiale*, which had been tried under an Orleans-Bourbon and now, rather surprisingly, under a Bonaparte. The Allies got under way very slowly, by no means for the last time in their joint history, and the Emperor, as a convenient base for the dispatch of troops to the Black Sea, established a camp at Boulogne, whence his uncle had planned to invade England. It was all romantic and exciting to the schoolroom at Windsor, especially when Papa, who so seldom went anywhere without Mama, was announced to be about to visit the Emperor at this same camp.

Mr. Charles Dickens was living near Boulogne at that time, and was an interested spectator of all the obligatory courtesies exchanged between the French and the English. One day he was coming back, covered with dust, from a walk along the Calais road when he met the Emperor and his guest — 'I took off my wide-awake without stopping to stare, whereupon the Emperor pulled off his cocked hat and Albert (seeing, I suppose, that it was an Englishman) pulled off his. Then we went our several ways'. It is improbable that Albert realized *what* Englishman it was, or knew that he had been saluted by one of the very greatest of his wife's subjects.

Certainly his wife, if she had known of it, would have set less store by the encounter than by the adroit letter which the Emperor sent

her to express his admiration of Albert's profound knowledge and seductive qualities. Before proceeding to these admirably-chosen adjectives, the Emperor opened with a facile phrase.

'The presence of Your Majesty's worthy spouse in a French camp has great political significance, since it proves the ultimate union of the two countries. . . .'

This was the sort of thing which the statesmen of the two countries were to write to each other in 1914 and again in 1939 and unfortunately it was quite meaningless. The *entente* of the phrasemakers at home were not repeated among the generals. Across Europe the two armies were beginning to cope with their task, only six months behind time, and the victories of the Alma, Balaclava and Inkerman were not sufficiently dazzling to hide the fact that there were disagreement between the two General Staffs and worse than disagreement in the conduct of their sanitary and victualling arrangements. The Queen herself was fully alive to the difficulties. In September 1854, twelve months before the fall of Sevastopol, she commented drily that 'the French show their usual vivacity in pressing so hard for decision upon what is to be done with Sevastopol when taken. Surely we ought to have taken it first before we can dispose of it. . . .' But at the same time she saw that the alliance depended on giving as much support as possible to the vivacious French, and in helping them to transport their reinforcements. She even offered her own yacht *Fairy* which would at least carry one thousand men. The Queen preferred action, prompt and efficient, to talk about what was to be done in a hypothetical future, and on the other side of Europe there stood on the Crimean heights a woman who also believed in action.

The Prince of Wales, like all boys, learned the names of the generals who were fighting the war; Lord Raglan, Marshal Saint Arnaud, and Marshal Canrobert, and thrilled to that entirely British miscarriage of discipline, the Charge of the Light Brigade. He was scarcely of an age to be thrilled by greater triumphs than those of the soldiers, the triumphs of the hospital ward and the field kitchen, but he did learn to admire the name of Miss Florence Nightingale.

She was, after all, the only person of truly heroic proportions in the whole of the war. The soldiers did their duty, and the Queen visited them, and was thrilled by them, and stored up their names

and histories in her remarkable memory, but she conceived that they would be made happy beyond all earthly dreams by the award of a medal, with clasps, designed by herself in honour of the Crimcan campaign. Her indefatigable husband found an outlet for his feelings in the organization of a very successful Patriotic Fund, in aid of which two drawings by his elder children were auctioned. Bertie's work brought in the sum of fifty-five guineas, while Vicky's went for two hundred and fifty. As everything she did was usually considered to be five times better than his efforts, this result was not surprising.

On December 12th the Prince of Wales made his first appearance in the House of Lords and listened to a heated debate in which the breakdown of the Army Medical Service was reprobated. It was his first glimpse of the constitutional machine at work — of a world quite different from the sheltered world of Windsor, where Mama and Papa were always right and everything was for the best in the best of all possible countries. These angry gentlemen were telling of a great many mistakes and failures; and once again he heard the name of Miss Florence Nightingale who, at Scutari, was spending her own money without waiting for the Patriotic Fund and, perhaps, smiling her thin-lipped smile at the Crimean Medal. Two years were to elapse before he saw her at Balmoral, and was delighted with her: above all, with her amazing lucidity and clearness of utterance. His Mama had a clear mind too, but her utterances were often excitable, sometimes blurred with easy tears, and he had heard her say that women were not fit for the work of government.

Perhaps some of the interest which the Prince of Wales showed in the women's movement of his middle years, and the friendship he extended to pioneer social workers like Miss Octavia Hill, had their origin in the Crimean War and Florence Nightingale. For Miss Nightingale, with her little plain morning cap like a crown above her pale face, did not look as if she would ever have to drive herself to work, or consider herself unfit to govern. Perhaps, Bertie may have reflected, as the voice of Papa recalled him to his studies, that was because she had never encumbered herself with a Prince Consort.

CHAPTER IV

PARIS, 1855

IN the summer of 1855 the Prince of Wales paid his first visit to Paris, which one of his biographers has described as 'an experience of Freudian significance'. In his fourteenth year the translation from the severities of Windsor to the indulgence of St. Cloud was in itself a glimpse of paradise, but it was not the only reason for his happiness in France. He was enthralled by the strange charm of the Emperor and the beauty of the Empress, but he had come under their spell earlier in the same year, during a state visit to Windsor. Certainly at St. Cloud the Imperial couple, as hosts, had more opportunity of showing kindness to their youthful guest, but their amiability, so different from Papa's stiffness, was at least no novelty to the boy. It was the *décor* of that amiability which was different: it was Paris herself which enslaved Albert Edward.

This experience, although it came to him in exceptional circumstances, was the same as that enjoyed by many young Britons before and since his day. Of those who have visited France before any other foreign country, a great many have been marked for life by their first encounter with the rich civilization of Paris, and have set the French capital above whatever else of urban glory the world may show them. But the love of princes can have more far-reaching results than the love of other men, and although Albert Edward, being human, was not loyal to all his ideals or all his affections, he never wavered from that time in his love for France.

He came to Paris at a moment when all his nascent impulses had been stimulated by the war and the Anglo-French alliance. If he had been allowed to visit the Paris of 1848 or 1849, the effect would not have been so pleasant, for then he would have seen sullen crowds, scarred with unemployment and poverty, who had no ready cheer for the representative of monarchy. But the moment was auspicious on both sides. If he was prepared to be delighted, the French were equally delighted with the boy in the Highland dress which, whether swinging above royal or military legs, has always reduced them to an admiration bordering on frenzy.

It was the hey-day of the Second Empire. The furies of the *coup d'état*, the murmurs about the Emperor's marriage to Eugénie de Montijo, had alike died away or been suppressed, and the fatal intervention in Italy and Mexico had not yet taken place. The dynasty was assured by the expectation of an heir in the following spring, and court and country seemed to have settled down to enjoy a period of prosperity. This was necessary to France, which had undergone frightful upheavals between 1789 and 1852, but like all military dictators Napoleon III was driven by the need to go on from strength to strength and from war to war. The victories in the Crimea were coming slowly enough, the hospitals were full of dying and wounded Frenchmen, and the fêtes for the English visitors were a most opportune way of distracting the public mind from these things. So the rococo splendours of the Second Empire were spread before the guests, and Albert Edward, who had scarcely seen anything but a few sober London festivals and the Christmas and birthday parties of Windsor, was utterly captivated. Even Papa was pleased, and what was rarer still he was pleased with the deportment of his children — for Vicky, almost a young lady now, had also accompanied her parents. Mama found that their entry into Paris was a 'scene which was *quite feenhaft* and which could hardly be seen anywhere else'.

The Prince of Wales agreed with her. He had already realized that things happened in Paris which could happen nowhere else in the world.

It was all a pageant for him: the brilliant illuminations all the way from the Gare de Strasbourg to St. Cloud, the drives to the Tuileries under the dusty August chestnuts of the Champs Elysées, the Cent-Gardes and the Zouaves in their exotic uniforms, the strains of 'God save the Queen' ringing through the Opéra, the beat of the waltz, that haunting insistent rhythm of the Second Empire — all that, with a curious quality of lightness in the air, made up Paris *tempo* for the boy.

Naturally he took a secondary place in the various festivities, though the crowd soon learned to look for him and give him a special cheer, but at one ceremony he took the leading part. His mother's wish, which amply reflected the morbid strain in her nature, was that he should kneel in prayer at the tomb of Napoleon. It was an extravagant demonstration of the new *entente cordiale* — the Queen

and Emperor side by side at the Invalides, the Prince of Wales on his knees at the tomb of Bonaparte — and one likely to shake the nerves of a sensitive boy. For they went to the Invalides by night, and while summer thunder rolled in the distance tall old men who had once been the soldiers of the Guard held up flambeaux to light the burial-place of their dead master. The Prince knelt by the immense tomb of red Friedland granite within which lay the little body of Napoleon, and the torchlight flickered on his silently moving lips and on the words written above the door of the crypt, as yet scarcely understood, but dimly felt, by the boy: '*Je veux que mes cendres reposent au bord de la Seine, au milieu de ce peuple Français que j'ai tant aimé*'.

That ordeal ended and the wonderful visit ended too. One of the spectators of the departure from the Gare de Strasbourg was touched to see the boy looking eagerly from side to side so as not to miss the last glimpse of Paris, and it was with more truth than is customary in such cases that the Queen wrote to her hosts that their stay in France had been the happiest period in her children's lives. To Stockmar she reported that the children had behaved beautifully and added a quaint judgment of Napoleon III. 'Without attempting to do anything particular to *make* one like him, or *any* personal attraction in outward appearance, he *has* the power of *attaching* those to him who come near him and know him, which is *quite incredible*.' The power was by no means so incredible as the Queen imagined. Her own son was possessed of it, and in even greater measure.

Another new experience was in store for Albert Edward -- a vicarious, a premonitory experience which befell him at Balmoral within a few weeks of the return from Paris. First came the long-desired news of the fall of Sevastopol and the excitement of lighting a bonfire on Craig Gowan, and then Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia arrived on a visit. He was the nephew and second heir of the king who had been so definite about his potential army of a million men, and he had come to ask for the hand of the Princess Royal.

Vicky was less than fifteen years old, but the match was approved by her parents, particularly by the Queen, whose ready jealousy where Albert was concerned had already been aroused by the ties of intellect which already bound him to his daughter. It was thought that the subject should not be broached to the girl herself until after her confirmation in the following spring, but the Prince found her, as he said, *so allerliebst* that he could not resist giving her a hint of his

hopes. So Vicky was all smiles and blushes, and there was an air of happy secrecy about Balmoral, very striking to the Prince of Wales. There he was, always treated as a small boy to be snubbed and criticized, and there was Vicky, only a year older, already unofficially betrothed and thinking of the days when she would be a wife and in due course a queen. It was the end, he saw, of his playmate Vicky: it was a hint that some day his parents would contract an alliance on his behalf as well, for such was the destiny of a Princess Royal or of a Prince of Wales.

It was after that summer that his temper seemed to alter, and the adolescent lad showed less sweet a nature than the little boy. The visit to Paris seemed to have unsettled him and he began to complain of overwork. So when the holidays came round again a treat, instructive and bracing at once, was arranged for him: he was to go on a walking tour, unaccompanied by any member of his family, but supervised by Mr. Gibbs and properly attended. The tour was to take place in Dorset, the lanes of which county, as yet unsung by Thomas Hardy, seemed to Bertie to compare most unfavourably with the Rue de Rivoli. It was impossible to maintain an incognito, for the Prince was recognized and cheered (what did they see to cheer in Bertie?) and Mr. Gibbs made this a pretext to abandon the trip. For the Prince's behaviour had not been good. He had sulked, he had been ill-tempered, he had not profited by the opportunities to moralize on the ruined vaults of the D'Urbervilles or make written comparisons between Perpendicular and Gothic. He was — but his father had always known it — a failure.

By this time Her Majesty's Ministers were taking an uneasy interest in the upbringing of the Prince of Wales. It was plain that he was being subjected to a forcing process of education and it was suspected that the family atmosphere was not always of the most wholesome. That November there was another fearful outburst of court mourning when Prince Charles of Leiningen, the Queen's half-brother, died of a paralytic seizure. His mother, the Duchess of Kent, was naturally grief-stricken, but his half-sister, who had seldom seen him since her childhood, quite surpassed her parent in woe. She dwelt with morbid interest on every detail of Prince Charles's illness and dissolution, reviving the Duchess's sorrow daily by bringing her pictures of the prince, his horses and all his belongings. The Princess Royal, taking her cue from Mama, was prostrate for two days, while Bertie

— it was the testimony of Lady Augusta Bruce — was 'full of love and attention' to the sufferers. But shortly after this episode Lord Granville approached Prince Albert and recommended very strongly that the heir be permitted a little more liberty, a little independence of the family group and above all the company of other boys — and that without paternal supervision.

After much cogitation another walking tour was planned for the spring of 1856, this time in the Lake District, which should be of more interest than the Dorset by-ways and inspire some useful reflections on the poetry of Wordsworth.

For such reflections the Prince scanned his son's diary in vain. There was the heir of England, in unimpeachable literary surroundings, accompanied by his quartette of boys with the unimpeachable names of Gladstone, Stanley, Cadogan and Wood, and the most spirited writing in the diary described how they had chased a sheep. Chased a sheep! This was what came of the society of other boys! But oddly enough Lord Granville still recommended young society, and the only possible move was to send Bertie and his quartette to some place where real work could be done, and where there would be no leisure for chasing sheep or anything else.

Thus began the period when the Prince of Wales was sent hither and thither about Europe like a badly directed parcel which lies for a while in some *Poste Restante* and then goes off on its travels again until the strings are frayed and the wrappings torn. He spent all the summer of 1857 on the Continent, Mr. Gibbs and a staff of tutors accompanying the party of boys and remaining in constant touch with Prince Albert's headquarters. The Prince had his hands full, for the Indian Mutiny had broken out and was causing grave anxiety, but he could always spare time from the needs of the troops on the Ganges for the needs of the Prince of Wales, a small rebellious sepoy on the banks of the Rhine.

The principal object of the party was to study the German language and literature at the famous centres of Bonn and Königs-winter. The excursions arranged were all of an instructive nature, although the Prince made two which were semi-official, one to meet his pretty cousin Charlotte of Belgium and her bridegroom, the Austrian Archduke Maximilian, and one to meet Prince Metternich at Johannisberg. The aged statesman, whose name had once struck terror across Europe but who had lived in eclipse since leaving

Vienna in a basket of dirty linen during the revolution of 1848, found the boy 'embarrassed and sad'.

The unfortunate boy reached home in the autumn, just in time for the death of another cousin, Victoria of Saxe-Coburg, the wife of the Duc de Nemours, shortly after the birth of a child. 'No words can describe the scene of woe,' the Queen told Lord Clarendon, and proceeded with ease to find words for the death chamber at Claremont, the impossibility of bearing this affliction, and the curious coincidence that 'the sad event took place just five days later than the death of poor Princess Charlotte under very similar circumstances forty years ago — and the poor Duchess was the niece of Princess Charlotte's husband.'

Mourning had to be laid aside in January, when the Princess Royal was married to Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, and the seventeen-year-old Vicky, after a painful parting from her father, sailed away to her new life in Prussia. The situation in Berlin was not an easy one, for the king had gone out of his mind and Vicky's father-in-law, his brother, was acting as regent, but the bride, imbued with the best teachings of Prince Albert and Stockmar, felt confident that she would overcome any difficulty which might arise.

This was the first gap in the family circle and it was soon evident that the Prince of Wales could not fill it. Princess Alice gently stepped into her sister's place as the child who was her parents' companion and comfort. Any of the others, indeed, would have done better in that role than Bertie: there was Prince Alfred, already winning golden opinions from his seniors in the Navy, and even little Prince Arthur appearing as the favourite of the room at a ghillies' ball at Balmoral. And there on the other hand was Bertie, who was neither keen nor energetic. It was hoped that his confirmation would work a spiritual change in him, and the infelicitous date of April 1st, 1858, was appointed for this event, when, like his father before him, he was subjected to a public examination in the articles of his faith and acquitted himself well before such critics as his parents and the Archbishop of Canterbury, even his mother admitting that 'his whole manner and *Gemüthsstimmung*, then and at the Sacrament, was gentle, good and proper'. But being confirmed had no effect on his studies.

As to his spiritual state, it was hard to tell how that was affected, for any developments in that direction were checked by Prince

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Albert. In July Mr. Gibbs reported that his pupil had expressed a desire to communicate on the following day. Instantly came the paternal veto: the Queen and her husband took the Sacrament only at Christmas and Easter, and the Prince of Wales must do the same. So if the boy had really experienced a growth in grace and a consequent desire to partake of the Sacrament, he was sharply made aware that while for any other youth this would have been a matter between his soul and God, in his case there was a third party in the transaction, who was his father. The latter, as a Protestant, despised the Catholic belief that a priest, a mere human being, could give the body of God to man, but he believed like most of his contemporaries that a father could interpret God to his children as and when he pleased.

A few weeks after this incident Albert Edward trod French soil again when he accompanied his parents to Cherbourg on a brief visit to the Emperor. To his regret there was no question of going on to Paris, for the French alliance was growing less and less popular in England. Some had been against it from the first, including that quiet observer Lady Augusta Bruce, who thought old international prejudices would prove too strong. 'If the Emperor has time to establish Free Trade,' she had written in 1855, 'he may perhaps do something to eradicate their prejudices permanently, but else there is no hope, and of course they will be ready to turn against us any moment.' That fatal readiness had been demonstrated by discord over the Crimean peace terms, and Victoria and her Ministers were growing very uneasy over the extravagant schemes of Napoleon III.

In November the Prince of Wales entered upon his eighteenth year, and of this, his last birthday before his legal coming of age, his parents made a most portentous occasion.

They drew up a vast memorandum, detailing all the duties and responsibilities which would be his on entering man's estate (for 'Life', they said, 'is composed of duties'), and his future position as the first gentleman in the country — which sounded, to their still apprehensive ears, less Hanoverian than the First Gentleman in Europe. His manner, his habits, his dress, were all discussed: slang and practical jokes were particularly reprehended, and the dangers of lax companions set forth in Bunyanesque language. It was no wonder that the Prince wept on reading this document.

It is not on record that his Governor wept, although he had a

memorandum to read too. The Governor had come into being overnight, for on this birthday Mr. Gibbs the tutor retired with a suitable decoration and Colonel Bruce the Governor reigned in his stead — *in loco parentis*, as his instructions said. The Honourable Robert Bruce was a Scotsman of the most hard-bitten type. He had none of the gentle charm of his sister Lady Augusta, but had a chilly rigidity of character which instantly reminded the well-informed observer that his father had been that Earl of Elgin who had taken the marbles from the Parthenon and brought them home to protective custody in the grime of Bloomsbury. This man of marble appealed strongly to the Prince Consort. He was firm, he was upright, he had a talent for reports. He was an ideal birthday gift for Bertie.

Bertie had another birthday gift — a Colonel's commission, bestowed on the strict understanding that he went nowhere near Aldershot.

A separate household was now to be formed for him at the White Lodge in Richmond Park, where under the direction of Colonel Bruce and a band of tutors and equerries, his studies and training were to continue. Before this new regime began he was allowed to go to Berlin to visit his sister, his father's jealousy dictating a request to the Prince Regent of Prussia that Bertie might only be accorded 'such slender courtesies as were suited to a very young member of the family'. This was not to be a holiday, for Colonel Bruce was to see that he prepared certain lessons for his tutors, and Vicky was desired to read aloud to him from improving books. It was a task after Vicky's own heart. She was spending a quiet winter in anticipation of her first confinement, and so the two old playmates of Windsor sat reading together soberly enough, while the frosty twilight crept through the dreary old-fashioned palace on the Unter den Linden.

CHAPTER V

NEW YORK, 1860

THE winter months of 1858-59 passed tediously at the White Lodge. As a light relief to the long hours of study, the Prince was occasionally allowed to give a dinner party, at which this or that eminent man, old enough to be his grandfather, was the guest of honour. Statesmen, scientists, men of letters sat in turn at the table of their future sovereign, where, as one guest remarked, 'the form of waiting for a remark or question from the royal host was not observed'. This was a fortunate relaxation of the royal rule for otherwise the guests might have sat dumb all evening while their Prince racked his brains for a suitably learned observation. As it was, men like Lord John Russell and Richard Owen threw the ball of conversation backwards and forwards above his head until it was neatly intercepted by one of the tutors, who would make some comment or interpolation within the Prince's comprehension. Most of the time he sat in silence at the head of his own table, only his innate courtesy enabling him to make some pretence of enjoyment or interest. Now and again there was a guest like Disraeli, who saw beneath the 'singularly sweet manner' to the depths of yawning boredom below, but in general the guests left with the impression that the boy was stupid.

Stupefied, rather: but he roused from his lethargy at the prospect of a new journey. He seemed to be doing the old-fashioned Grand Tour in sections: having visited the German Rhine he was to meditate on the Roman Forum, and the Pope, Pius IX, had already told the British Resident, Mr. Odo Russell, that he would be honoured to receive the Prince of Wales and that Mr. Russell must confer with Cardinal Antonelli as to the best means of making the visit useful and pleasant. The communication of these plans caused dismay at Windsor, for the presence of the Pope was the sole, if quite immovable, drawback to the Prince's stay in Rome. It was not that the lady who was styled Defender of the Faith was not broadminded: quite the contrary, and she knew her duty to her Catholic subjects; it was the Pope who was the stumbling block, for Pio Nono was a byword for intrigue, and if Bertie went to see him, *what* might he

not pretend that Bertie had said? Happily there was Colonel Bruce, that man of marble, who would keep cool in any crisis.

With many warnings and instructions, the cortège set out for Italy, being overtaken by the news that raised the Prince to avuncular rank — the birth of the Princess Royal's son Wilhelm. 'He scratches his face and tears his caps and makes every sort of extraordinary noise', wrote the young mother proudly to her Mama. 'I cannot say I think him like any one at present, although now and then he reminds me of Bertie and Leopold, which I fear you won't like.'

The visit to Rome was given over to the study of Italian archaeology and art, and the perfecting of the Prince's excellent French — one of the few subjects which interested him and for which he retained a resident tutor, M. Brasseur, for years after his marriage. The social side was full of interest, for besides receiving eminent men — a method of self-chastisement with which the lad was now painfully familiar — he had to pay certain visits which required some *savoir faire*. Robert Browning, Frederick Leighton the artist and Morley the historian were all presented to him, and he took a certain pleasure in visiting the Roman studios and chatting rather shyly to painters and sculptors. But when he set out to pay calls he had to exercise the utmost care, for he had two sovereigns in distress to visit — Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, exiled from his country in lunacy, and Queen Cristina of Spain, exiled from hers for immorality. Then he had to visit the Irish Catholic community and its College — a very difficult exercise, requiring him to combine the benevolent interest of the future father of all his people with the firmness of the future Protestant champion. It was a visiting list before which a skilled diplomat might have quailed, and yet this boy of seventeen, who however well he was coached beforehand, had in the last resource to rely on his own ability, came through the test triumphant.

Following on the lunatic, the adulteress and the Irishmen, the Prince of Wales paid his addresses to the Pope. This was considered so important that Colonel Bruce accompanied him to the Presence: he had better have remained outside. The phlegmatic Colonel lost his head for once, for when the Pope turned the conversation to politics, and explained that he had not intended to show hostility to Britain when he revived the Catholic Hierarchy in that country, the Governor, fearful of what might come next, fairly dragged his charge from the room, and hustled him home without paying the

obligatory visit to Cardinal Antonelli. It was no wonder that after such a bungled affair the Prince was unable to send his Papa the moral, political and religious reflections on his visit which the Consort would have liked to read. Alas for that profligate Prince! The thing which seemed to have most impressed and pleased him during the visit was the Carnival, when gay unroyal people pelted each other with flowers and confetti, and a warm breath of the Roman spring blew in from the Campagna.

But a breath of war came down from the Austrian frontier, and the Prince was taken home via Spain and Portugal, where Dom Pedro V, only a few years his senior, had already ascended his throne and married a beautiful bride, the Duchess Stephanie von Hohenzollern. No such independence awaited the Prince of Wales. On his return home he found a fresh educational programme prepared for him.

Now the Prince Consort had once delivered himself of some very sage advice to be passed on to a young diplomat, Mr. Ewan Baillie of Dochfour, which is well worth quoting here. Asking how the young man spent his time in Frankfurt, he said:

‘Does he mix in the society of the place, does he study the people *of all grades*, get thoroughly acquainted with their thoughts and feelings, the resources, the customs, the machinery of the state; everything in fact that influences the commonwealth and goes to make up the individuality of the country and people and that enables one to understand and estimate the place they hold in the world; their bias, their tendencies, and the complicated causes that determine these, with their probable modifications or changes of durability?’

There is so much good sense mixed with the pompous language of this exordium that one is tempted to ask why the Consort could not have applied it to the upbringing of his own son. The youth had now travelled in six European countries, which was excellent in itself, but of his own land he knew little except the royal residences, the streets of the capital, and the sheep of the Lake District. His time in Britain had been spent, not in studying ‘everything that goes to make up the individuality of the country and people’, the growing industries of Birmingham and Manchester, the growing depopulation of the Highlands, but dead languages and disputed philosophies; and not only the Cabinet but the country was growing weary of such an educational system. The Prince Consort, however, persevered, and instead of permitting his son to enjoy a summer holiday he

dispatched him to Edinburgh, to study Chemistry with Playfair at the University and Greek and Roman history with Dr. Schmidt, the German rector of the High School. Neither pedagogue was conscientiously able to praise his pupil.

The summer vacation thus profitably spent, the Prince's educational pilgrimage led him to Oxford. Here as usual his father's mania prevented him from enjoying the advantages open to other lads of his age. It was precisely those other young men whom the Consort dreaded. Young men had a fearful effect upon each other: they smoked, they drank, they gambled, they indulged in loose talk and sometimes even in loose living. Such influences — and poor Bertie was very easily influenced — would inevitably corrupt him, would destroy that vanilla-cream shape of Galahad which the world should see when the mould of his education was at last removed. A University was a place for study: if all aristocratic England thought it was equally a place for play that had no effect upon the Coburger. Bertie was enrolled at Christ Church, but since to live in College would inevitably have exposed him to the society of his fellow-students (that alarming blend of lepers and wolves) an establishment was formed for him at Frewen Hall, and thither his gloomy suite removed.

It was the life of White Lodge over again. General Bruce — he received his promotion in December — exercised his accustomed surveillance, and for recreation permitted only an occasional dinner party where learned men conversed over the torpid form of their Prince, whose contributions to their talk were but scanty. Once, at least, he betrayed an interest in contemporary fiction by a shy but determined championship of *Adam Bede*, whose intensely human pages had evidently touched him more than Sophocles, and at all times his politeness mastered his boredom, so that Dean Liddell, who saw a good deal of him, pronounced him 'the nicest fellow possible — with a royal memory for faces'. He was not allowed to see many new faces at this time, for only a few privileged youths shared the private lectures delivered before him by University tutors, but he did contrive to make two lasting friendships with undergraduates of The House — Sir Frederick Johnstone and Mr. Harry Chaplin, whose interests were more sporting than intellectual. It must be admitted that his father was right about the corruption of University life, for he began to smoke in secret, hiding from the eye of General Bruce behind the shrubbery, like a defaulting errand-boy. He acquired

another vice at this time, but not from his contemporaries. It was at Cuddesdon, in the company of Bishop Wilberforce — a gentleman who rejoiced in the nickname of 'Soapy Sam' — that he first played cards for money. This he recalled, with a touch of irony, at the time when the Tranby Croft scandal broke over Britain.

During this cheerless winter he came of age. The effect of his eighteenth birthday had been slightly marred by the solemnities of the one before, but his parents were fully equal to producing a new stock of admonitions and behests when he went home to Windsor for the *Geburtstagsfest*. While he was there he read the patronizing leader in *The Times* in which Mr. Delane, in the tones of a bishop who assures schoolboys that they cannot all win prizes, reminded the country that a king might be great without the possession of extraordinary talents and famous without dazzling exploits. And so, the country having been judiciously prepared for a ruler without brains or initiative, the Prince of Wales returned to Oxford. His mother, on attaining the same age, had had to wait just twenty-seven days before entering into her great inheritance. He himself was destined to wait nearly forty-two years.

In the New Year of 1860 the Prince Consort was preoccupied with a new project for his son, which was nothing less than a voyage to Canada.

It was a crucial period in Imperial policy. Up to the time of Victoria's accession, and for some years after, there had been no definite realization, on the part of the Crown or the Cabinet, of the British Empire as a coherent whole. There was a Colonial Office, where the problems of each colony were docketed into separate pigeon-holes and never considered in relation to each other, and there were critics who said that this Office might be abolished, and the colonies allowed to go their own way. Moreover, even in 1860, the situation of some of the colonies was still fluid. Frontiers as well as laws had to be adjusted: relations with the mother country had still to be worked out; and it was the sapient wish of the Consort, ever working to increase the power of the Crown, that the Empire should be united by centralization and that the royal house should be personally concerned in this process. 'What a cheering picture is here,' he wrote to Stockmar as his two elder sons set off on the first Imperial missions undertaken by members of the royal house, 'of the progress and expansion of the British race and of the useful co-operation of the

royal family in the civilization which England has developed and advanced!

The middle years of the nineteenth century saw a number of new and rich colonies added to the British dominions overseas, but naturally these were not so highly developed, from the political viewpoint, as the older possessions. Of the latter, Canada was one of the most important, and as yet its vast resources had scarcely been tapped, though the tide of emigration was flowing further and further west. Since the conquest of the French in Canada, one great problem had been the absorption of the French *habitants* into the colonial system, and fortunately this had not completely taken place — in other words, a definite French population, with its own language and civilization, lived side by side with the only European immigrants with whom peace could have been preserved: natives of Scotland, driven from the Highlands by their shortsighted landlords, or driven from the Lowlands by their own thirst for adventure and prosperity. Upper Canada had been British, Lower Canada had been French, and the two parts had recently been joined, the hamlet of Bytown having been chosen for the new capital in 1858 and dignified with the name of Ottawa.

The intricacies of Canadian politics had occupied the Government during the early years of the Queen's reign, but the loyalty of Canada was never in doubt and Canadian regiments had fought magnificently in the Crimea. The young country, conscious of its powers, had begun to agitate for a visit from the Queen, and for the appointment of one of her sons as Governor-General.

Neither of these requests could be granted. The Queen could not leave the centre of government for so long an absence, and her elder sons, at eighteen and fifteen, were considered too young to govern a colony, although their mother, at eighteen, had ruled an empire. But the Prince Consort suggested — and in the long run, thanks to his previous policy of decrying Bertie's ability, had to insist — that the Prince of Wales should make a journey across Canada, performing various ceremonies and receiving various addresses, and generally demonstrating the interest of the Crown in its North American subjects. As for the American citizens south of the Canadian border, whose allegiance had been lost to Britain nearly ninety years before, their enthusiasm for monarchy was as usual entirely at variance with their republican sentiments, and they immediately clamoured for a visit from the Prince of Wales.

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1860 was a very important year in the United States. President Buchanan—who sent the formal invitation to the Court of St. James's—was still in office at the White House, but a presidential election was about to take place which was destined to usher in the long-awaited struggle between the North and the South. Victoria and Albert pondered the advisability of sending Bertie into such an overcharged atmosphere. Might there not be the danger, too, that some crazy Irish immigrant might try to level old scores by that favourite expression of Irish disapproval—the shot in the dark or the stab in the back? Finally it was decided to take the risk. Bertie should go to America; and Bertie sailed for the New World in July.

Of the staff who accompanied him the two most important members were the Duke of Newcastle, who as Colonial Secretary had the thankless task of writing the replies which the Prince should read to all the loyal addresses, and General Bruce, whose Attic—or rather Doric—calm was seen to be weakening somewhat after nearly two years of Bertie. The first reports of these gentlemen, eagerly awaited at Windsor, dealt with the impression made by the Prince on the people of Newfoundland. The Duke's was encouraging: 'His manners with the people were frank and friendly without any mixture of assumed study to gain popularity by over-civility'. General Bruce's was characteristic: 'His Royal Highness acquitted himself admirably and seems pleased with everything, *himself included*'. That was the song they sang across a continent and back again: strophe and anti-strophe: the Duke discriminating, thankful that all was going better than he had hoped, the General pleased too, but always ready to put the sting in the tail of his message, repeating over and over again the warning that Bertie was growing self-satisfied, wilful, spoilt.

He had been spoiled so long by harshness that it was no wonder he was spoiled at the other extreme, when for the first time in his life he drained the heady draught of admiration and popularity. For his success was instant, universal; his politeness was delightful; his hesitancy was not stupidity, it was natural modesty; his easy manners were exactly right for the free-and-easy country of Upper Canada and his youthful dignity was exactly right for the formalities of the French territory. Bertie the lazy son of an industrious father, Bertie the family failure, was Bertie the idol of the North American continent, and his astounded parents mingled disbelief with their gratification.

Two of the most important ceremonies of his tour were the opening

of the bridge over the St. Lawrence at Montreal and the laying of the foundation stone of the new Parliament House at Ottawa. These he accomplished almost at the same time as his brother Alfred, in South African waters with his ship, laid the foundation stone of the new breakwater at Cape Town Harbour.

On August 21st he made his state entry into Quebec. There again he was rapturously welcomed by French as well as by British, although Newcastle had been exercised by the appearance of the *tricolore* side by side with the Union Jack on the towers of the Cathedral. But the Catholic Archbishop amiably agreed to exchange it for the Cross of St. George, and Newcastle was satisfied. His troubles, however, were only beginning. The Orangemen of Upper Canada chose to be offended at the civilities paid to the French Catholic communities; and in the townships of Kingston and Toronto, where they were particularly strong, they determined to give him a rousing Orange welcome. Hearing something of their preparations, the Duke of Newcastle wrote to the Governor-General, stating that the Prince of Wales could not countenance such demonstrations, which would grievously affront the Catholic population, whether British or French, and incite to civil riot: the Governor-General passed on the warning to the appropriate mayors: the warning was ignored, and when the Prince sailed up the river to Kingston it was to be received with vulgar transparencies and banners showing the downfall of the Pope and the glorification of King Billy, and by the cacophonous strains of 'Boyne Water'.

It was an embarrassing situation, but the Colonial Secretary kept his word, and the Prince did not go ashore. He proceeded to Belleville, only to find that a mob of Orange hooligans had gone there by train from Kingston and were waiting to repeat their welcome, now tinged with personal malice. The royal party had to go on to Toronto, where Orange feeling was somewhat modified by wiser counsels — though not entirely, for Newcastle found a King-Billy-and-the-Pope transparency stretched along the very route of the state procession. It took every atom of the Prince's tact to deal with all the difficulties that rose out of Protestant intransigence in Upper Canada, but he came through the ordeal successfully, if not unmarked. For it increased the latitudinarianism he had inherited from his mother, and thereafter any hint of bigotry, or persecution of any particular sect, aroused his anger.

The whole foolish business cost the Duke of Newcastle much worry, and the drafting of innumerable reports to the home Government, while General Bruce wrote nearly as many on the conduct of his charge. Bertie blossomed in this atmosphere of success, and claimed more independence than seemed proper to his Governor: there were clashes between the two, and the General's female relatives in England breathed sweet concern over 'poor Robert and his Boy'. There was a hilarious encounter with Blondin at Niagara Falls, with the Prince recklessly agreeing to be wheeled over the Falls in a barrow balanced on a tight-rope (a project immediately vetoed by his horrified entourage), and another with Red Indians, and when they crossed the American border hilarity was unconfined. He crossed the Middle West amid the plaudits of the inhabitants who left the prairies to see his train go by: he was fêted at Washington, where pretty Miss Lane, President Buchanan's niece, rendered his stay at the White House agreeable, and he planted a chestnut tree at the grave of George Washington. 'The Prince Consort had given up expecting moral reflections in Bertie's diary by this time: if Bertie had not been stirred by such a theme as 'the First Prince of Wales visiting the Pope' he was not likely to be moved to eloquence by that of 'the First Prince of Wales at the tomb of the Champion of American Independence.' But even his pessimistic heart must have failed at the peculiarly childish and ungrammatical account furnished by his son:

'Mount Vernon is a much revered spot by the Americans, as the house in which General Washington lived and also died is there.'

Bertie could not express his thoughts on paper, but he could speak them out in an agreeably frank and boyish way, and he could look them, perhaps sigh them a little, when he took a pretty American by the hand and swung her crinoline out on to a ballroom floor. The capital, and the great cities, fêted him magnificently, but their festivities were outdone by New York, which received him 'with a clamour of noise which shook Washington Square and Brooklyn from their patrician calm and seemed to presage the great ovation given to twentieth-century heroes. There was another ball, in the Academy of Music, of which the Prince tersely reported that 'three thousand were invited and five thousand came, which of course was not an improvement'. Part of the floor fell in under this influx of mid-Victorian gate-crashers; it was repaired, and the dancing went

on. They were dancing the waltz in New York: it brought back the *tempo* of Paris, where the waltz was throbbing still as the Second Empire swung up to its apex. Paris and New York, they were the two cities which had most impressed the Prince of Wales so far, and the latter he never saw again, but on his only visit he, the most complete of Europeans, acquired a taste for New York *tempo* which never deserted him and which had much influence on the social history of his reign. The people of New York divined his pleasure and worshipped him for it. Such a tide of popularity rose about him that one observer remarked that he would be a lucky lad if he got away without being nominated for President.

But the future President was in Illinois, awaiting his solitary destiny, and the Prince of Wales, who had been respectful to the shade of President Washington and polite to the presence of President Buchanan, never encountered Abraham Lincoln, or touched the hand of the greatest of Americans.

In November, as the shadows of party strife and approaching war closed in upon the United States, the Prince sailed for home. His parents awaited him with a fearful anticipation. They had read so many glowing accounts of his charming personality, of his public triumphs, that they hardly recognized the picture of their scapegrace Bertie. Ah, but there was always General Bruce, who would tell the truth, however painful — he had sad tales of wilfulness and self-importance to relate. How different from Major Cowell's reports of Alfred, which were excellent in every way! Passing on this good news to her Uncle, the Queen commented, 'He really is such a dear gifted handsome child that it makes one doubly anxious he should have as few failings as mortal men can have. Our poor Bertie is still on the Atlantic, detained by very contrary winds, which those large vessels with only an auxiliary screw and only eight days' coal cannot make any way against. Two powerful steamers have now gone out to look for him and bring him in'.

Thus the Queen, writing of the son who had enhanced the popularity of the Crown in Canada and strengthened Anglo-American friendship, as if he were somehow to blame for his delayed arrival. Yes, that was it, apart entirely from the machinery and the coal; the unpunctuality, the failure to appear on schedule, were typical of Bertie, and two powerful vessels had better go out and find him, as if the Prince of Wales were a small, stray and disobedient dog.

CHAPTER VI

COPENHAGEN, 1862

AFTER the triumphs and excitements of the New World, the Prince of Wales found the air of Frewen Hall stale and unprofitable. Whist with 'Soapy Sam' and cigars behind the rhododendrons were childish amusements after the gaieties of Washington and New York, and he finished the term at Oxford with a growing sense of oppression. It is probable that wise handling at this crisis would have made a considerable difference to his future life, but his father, completely disregarding his son's manhood, condemned him still to the discipline of a schoolboy — perhaps regarding it as a useful corrective to that self-importance of which General Bruce had complained. In the New Year of 1861 Bertie was dispatched to Cambridge, once again as an extra-collegiate student, with an establishment at Madingley Hall.

This was one of the crucial years of his life, and one of the most depressing. A series of family tragedies and the dismal contrast between his transatlantic adventures and life at Madingley combined to sour the sweetness of his temper and make him capricious and moody. He learned little more at Cambridge than at Oxford, although the keen personality of one of his tutors did make a real impression on him. Charles Kingsley, then Professor of History, was the right teacher for the Prince of Wales, with his blend of Broad Church doctrine and zest for the British spirit of adventure. *Westward Ho!* was exactly the sort of book to please a youth who liked action, vigour and optimism. Of the latter quality he had much need as the spring of 1861 unfolded itself, for once again the voice of mourning was heard at Windsor. In January it was the mad King of Prussia who died, and Vicky's descriptions of the death-rattles, the perspiration, the chill accompanying the event proved her to be the true daughter of her mother and moved her parents to an outburst of vicarious grief and emotion at the thought that their beloved child was now one step nearer a throne. In March a genuine sorrow — the first — convulsed Victoria when her mother died of a painful and lingering disease. All her previous distresses were eclipsed as she hung over the corpse of the parent from whom she had once been

estranged, and as her children tried in vain to stem the tears, the lacerating memories in which she found invariable relief, they might well have thought that no other bereavement could inspire such misery. But before the year was out another blow, heavier and still more real, was to fall upon the Queen.

In the summer, when Court mourning had somewhat relaxed, the Prince of Wales was allowed for the first time to taste the pleasures of a military life and go into camp in Ireland. It was the only bright spot in the year — perhaps it was too bright, for it was impossible to shelter him from his brother-officers as he had been sheltered from the undergraduates, and in the mess his abounding good fellowship found a congenial outlet. Once again he tasted those 'social joys' as Robert Burns would have called them, which he had experienced in the houses where he had been entertained in Canada and America, and whist with Bishop Wilberforce proved a useful training for games of cards played for higher stakes than those of Cuddesdon. His parents paid a visit to Dublin and went to see him at the Curragh, the Queen commenting, in the familiar tone of denigration, 'Bertie marched past with his company and did not look at all so very small'.

When the field-day was over they contrived to have a few words with him in private, when a very momentous subject was discussed — a subject which had exercised them, as well as King Leopold and Baron Stockmar, for nearly three years. They had drawn up a list of seven princesses, any one of whom was fitted by birth and upbringing to become the wife of the Prince of Wales: the question was, did the Prince feel himself ready for marriage? He was going on for twenty years old, the age at which his parents had been married, and they were anxious that so important a question should be settled with as little delay as possible, but even they hesitated to impose their will too forcibly on their son. Their own marriage had been more or less arranged for them, and it had turned out radiantly happy, the same could be said for the marriage of Vicky and Fritz Wilhelm and the betrothal of Princess Alice and Louis of Hesse: surely poor Bertie's happiness might be ensured as well, for Bertie with the wrong wife would be a national calamity. Very gently, then, the topic was broached, and Bertie, feeling manly and independent in the atmosphere of the Curragh, found this new aspect of man's estate not unpleasing, and agreed to pay his addresses to the seven candidates for his hand and future throne.

ALBERT EDWARD

As it happened this was not necessary. His sister Vicky was beginning to spread her wings now that she was the Crown Princess of Prussia and the mother of two children, and was ready to take a practical interest in many projects, including her brother's marriage. She happened to meet the young lady who was fifth on the list of possible Princesses of Wales, and was captivated by her beauty and charm. This was the Princess Alexandra of Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg, and the young Crown Princess determined to introduce her first to Bertie's notice.

In the Glyptotek at Copenhagen there are two statues of Danish princesses, Alexandra and Dagmar, which show them in their lovely girlhood, every curl, every curve of brow and lip rendered with a vivacity which imparts life to the chilly marble so that even the most casual observer feels something of the vitality which carried them to the greatest thrones in the world. Dagmar, whose merry mouth and *retroussé* nose give her sculptured face a curiously modern look, became the Empress Marie of Russia. Alexandra, destined to be Queen and Empress both, has a beauty that belongs to no century, but is immortal in its tender calm. When Albert Edward saw that perfect profile in the shadows of the great Cathedral at Speier, where his matchmaking sister led him in September 1861, he knew that he had found his Princess, and that the other six could be struck from the list forever.

The mother of the seventeen-year-old Princess was Louise of Hesse-Cassel, niece and heiress of the King of Denmark, in whose capital she and her husband, Christian of Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg, had spent most of their married life. The fact that the blood of two German princely houses ran in the veins of Alexandra was scarcely considered; she was regarded as a Danish princess, having been born in the Gule Palace of Amalienborg in 1844. Princess Louise was the heiress of Denmark, but her six children were brought up with the utmost frugality in the clean and sparkling little capital which Hans Andersen's tales were making popular in Europe and where Andersen himself was a frequent guest at the Gule Palace; there was a fairy-story flavour about the romance of the Princess chosen from six rivals for her beauty, and when it became known that marriage would bring Alexandra wealth and luxury such as she had never known, it was felt that like another citizen of Copenhagen she too had put on the galoshes of fortune. But the

story was not made public yet, for the Prince's endless education was not complete, and he returned from Germany to Cambridge with his suit still undeclared, though now approved by his parents, who were thankful that Bertie had shown some personal interest in a matter which after all deeply concerned himself.

Every experience of adult freedom which the Prince enjoyed at this time had the effect of making him more discontented with the discipline of constant and fruitless study. The voyage to Canada, the summer at the Curragh, the glimpse of the lovely Princess were in turn the cause of fresh chafing against the tyranny of his mentors. That autumn, as the fogs rolled up from the Fens, his behaviour was worse than ever. More than once he stole away from Madingley to seek the furtive freedom of London. His longing for liberty led to escapades in Cambridge, and finally the Prince Consort was informed of his misdoing. The Consort was in poor health and overwhelmed with work that winter: he had caught a rheumatic chill while inspecting the new buildings at Sandhurst, but the admonition of Bertie was more than a necessity, it was a positive habit. Though weary and discouraged, he hastened to Cambridge, and when he returned to Windsor it was seen that he was seriously ill. December came in and the sufferer's physical resistance, always slight, seemed to grow less. Too late, he was diagnosed to be in the grip of typhoid fever.

During the first part of his illness only the most perfunctory tidings had been sent to Bertie, in disgrace at Madingley, and when it became evident that the worst was to be expected, those around her begged the Queen to send for her son. This she refused to do — as much because of her invincible optimism, which persuaded her that her husband was merely suffering from what she had had (and *much worse*) at Ramsgate in 1835, as because of her feeling that this was not a time to be bothered with Bertie. But on the night of December 13th, when all at Windsor except his wife realized that the Consort's hours were numbered, Princess Alice on her own initiative sent a telegram to her brother. Shaken with fear and self-reproach, he came post-haste to Windsor at three o'clock in the morning. He was in time to see his father alive, but the Prince never fully regained consciousness and died without a word to the object of his most attentive and misguided care.

In the terrible period which followed, his mother, had she chosen,

could have won him and held him forever. His faults, such as they were, were the faults of youth, and had largely been engendered by the very system which was to make him faultless. He could have put them all aside and set his life to a new purpose from that moment if the Queen had turned to him as her chief comfort in the hour of her desolation and called him the son who should henceforth take his father's place and share with her the burden and heat of the day. There had been a period, a very brief one, when the mother and son had clung to one another in the first burst of sorrow, but inevitably the Queen drew away. For underneath her grief was the thought, hardly admitted and often stifled, *Bertie did this*. If Bertie had not misbehaved, Albert would never have gone to Cambridge. He would have rested at Windsor until that first chill was shaken off and he would have been alive to-day. 'This is Bertie's fault, and I shall not forget it.

So, with the strength that never deserted her, she had presently steelled her resolution to go on thenceforward alone, ruled in all things by the wishes of Albert, and sharing neither burden nor honours with any one but him. Even her uncle, who was fond of giving advice, received a warning. '*His wishes — his plans — about everything,*' she wrote, '*his views about everything are to be my law! And no human power will make me swerve from what he decided and wished — I look to you to support and help me in this. I apply this particularly as regards our children — Bertie, etc. — for whose future he had traced everything so carefully. I am also determined that no one person — may he be ever so good, ever so devoted among my servants — is to lead or guide or dictate to me.*'

It was the definite statement of a policy which was to be followed for forty years, and in the case of 'Bertie, etc.' with most fatal rigidity. But the Queen's resolution was at first not suspected, for only to her uncle did she reveal it. Her other correspondents saw only the frail woman, torn with the grief which was so much more impressive when it poured from her own emphatic pen than when the Prince of Wales rendered it into *oratio obliqua*. 'She [the Queen] wished me to say that her future happiness was blighted forever but that she would now live solely for her duties and try in every way to do that which she thought her departed husband would have wished.' Thus the Prince to Lord John Russell, giving a curiously flat effect to the royal sorrow.

The period of the obsequies ended at last, and 1862 came in. Any hopes that the Prince may have had of staying at Windsor and helping his mother and sisters were soon disappointed. The Queen considered him 'the difficulty of the moment' and insisted that he should undertake the journey to Palestine which his father had so carefully planned for him. It was not a mere voyage of pleasure or even of instruction: nothing could be more appropriate to mourning than the solemnities of the Holy Land at Easter-time, and in a fitting spirit of reverent sadness the Prince was dispatched on his pilgrimage. He was accompanied by General Bruce and by a sympathetic churchman, Arthur Stanley, who became the Dean of Westminster and his very good friend. Mr. Stanley was an admirable guide to the Holy Places. He interpreted the New Testament to the Prince in plain and eloquent language, while General Bruce, as requested, interpreted his mother's wishes concerning his marriage. The image of Princess Alexandra, whom indeed he had not forgotten through all the troubles of the winter, was kept before his eyes, and from time to time he bought foreign presents 'for the young lady' as he simply said. These were the lighter moments, and there were others as well, for instance in Cairo, where he enraged his mother by riding on a donkey, and after he arrived at Marseilles on his homeward voyage. For, though his deep mourning precluded his reception at the Tuileries, the Emperor and Empress insisted that he should stay with them *en famille* at Fontainebleau. It was France again, Paris *tempo*, and he had a brief spell of summer pleasure while the chestnuts lighted their pink and white candles in his honour, and he talked and even dared to laugh with the people he understood so well. Fontainebleau was a long way from the darkened rooms of Windsor, perhaps a longer way still from the old palace at Copenhagen where a girl was beginning to prepare herself to be his wife. Alexandra's trousseau was small and plain, Alexandra's life had been a quiet and simple one, with lessons in domestic economy and practical nursing — the preparations were more suited to a future Copenhagen housewife than to a Princess of Wales. But there were great things in store, and the girl thought of them in the long summer afternoons while the fresh winds blew off the Sound and the toy soldiers drilled in the square at Amalienborg.

As she enjoyed the tranquillity of Denmark her future husband underwent another trial at Windsor. General Bruce, whose zeal had

flagged towards the end of their journey, fell ill and died on June 27th, his resistance weakened by nearly five years of his Boy. The malady was a low Syrian fever, contracted abroad, and the Queen regarded him as a soldier killed in battle while serving his prince. General Bruce had died for Bertie, as a greater man had done, and the Queen had lost another valued support thereby. Always Bertie! — his mother, with tightened lips, refused his request for a younger companion, and appointed to the vacant place no less a disciplinarian than the sixty-five-year-old President of the Council of Military Education, Sir William Knollys. This veteran was styled the Prince's Comptroller, not his Governor, for his Household was now to be formed in good earnest, with his marriage in view.

The Queen's formal request for the hand of Princess Alexandra had arrived at Copenhagen, and the girl, shy and elated in her simple finery, had been taken by her parents to the neutral ground of Belgium. There, under the ageing but observant eye of King Leopold, she met the Prince at Laeken, and on September 9th they became engaged. The next day — it was almost inevitable — they visited the field of Waterloo, and after enjoying some of the very subdued entertainments of King Leopold's Court, they parted for the time being. Alexandra went back to Copenhagen, to dream of jewels and gowns unlimited, and describe the visit to fifteen-year-old Dagmar, with a whisper for the Prince and a gasp of awe for his mother. For an ordeal awaited Alexandra: she was to visit Windsor with her father in the autumn, with no proud fiancé there to protect her. Victoria, who detested courting couples at the best of times (although she herself had been the most sentimental of betrothed maidens), could scarcely bear the sight of young lovers since her husband's death, and the Prince was banished on a Mediterranean tour. He was very much in love, and his mother's Ladies laughed at him good-naturedly as he went about smiling and fingering the twelve-page letters brought by the Danish courier. He hoped his love's gentle beauty would win his Mama's heart, and indeed it did, but Victoria had not sent for her future daughter-in-law to inspect her good looks, nor to read the well-worn books of piety which the Princess carried with her. She wanted to give her a few lessons on politics and in particular to warn her to do nothing to bias her husband in the Schleswig-Holstein Question.

Now Alexandra had timidly hoped that the Queen would like

her, and be glad to know that she had been helping her own Mama with Sunday schools and the care of poor children: she was hardly competent to discuss Questions with a past-mistress of diplomacy. But she had heard a great deal about Schleswig-Holstein, which was the most vexatious topic in Copenhagen, and had troubled the Powers since 1848. At that time Denmark had insisted that both Duchies should be 'indissolubly connected' with the Danish Crown. Prussia had desired to see Holstein, as a member of the Germanic Confederation, receiving a separate constitution, but the Prussia of Friedrich Wilhelm IV was not strong enough to impose its will, and a compromise settlement was effected in 1852. But the Holsteiners appealed to the German diet when the revenues of the Duchy, hitherto reserved for its own use, were diverted to the Danish treasury, and by the spring of 1861 there was a complete disagreement between the Duchies and the Parliament of Denmark. The attitude of Prussia and Austria, who demanded that Schleswig as well as Holstein should be independent of Denmark, gave rise to anxiety, and in this very month of Alexandra's betrothal Lord John Russell was trying to settle matters with a proposal for the independence of the Duchies under the Danish Crown with a Council of State consisting of a relative proportion of Germans and Danes. Six days later Bismarck, while speaking on another matter, virtually replied to Lord John when he said, 'It is not with speeches or with parliamentary resolutions that the great questions of the day are decided, as was mistakenly done in 1848 and 1849, but with blood and iron!'

Thus was flung down the gauntlet: thus opened the conflict between protocol and armaments which was to rend Europe for a hundred years, and in the inauspicious shadow of the Schleswig-Holstein Question did Alexandra come before Victoria and learn from those austere lips that the will of Prussia must prevail. Had not Albert 'gone all lengths with Prussia'? The young princess trembled, she foresaw troubles in her new life and troubles too for the beloved little country she was leaving. But far away her betrothed was writing with simple fervour, 'I feel a new interest in everything and somebody to live for'. It was what he had always craved since they took Mr. Birch away from him — somebody to live for, and somebody to love him.

CHAPTER VII

MARLBOROUGH HOUSE, 1863

THE news of the Prince of Wales' betrothal gave great satisfaction in Britain. The populace, which had never appreciated the Prince Consort, had wearied a little during the year of mourning and hoped that wedding festivities would put an end to the restrictions of the Queen's widowhood. There was much sympathy with the Prince of Wales, who was felt to have been unduly repressed, and pleasure in his romantic happiness and the fact that his choice had fallen on a Danish princess and not on some blonde German *Mädchen*. It was felt that one German Consort had been quite enough to be going on with. But conversely the news was 'a shock to Germany' and considered as an intimation that Britain would side with Denmark in the Schleswig-Holstein Question. When it became known that the Crown Princess of Prussia had promoted the match there were some mutterings in Berlin, where *die Engländerin* was growing unpopular as she grew older and more active in politics.

During the winter of 1862-63 preparations went forward for the marriage, fixed for March, and for the installation of the young couple in a home of their own. A town house and a country house were already at their disposal, thanks to the foresight of the Prince Consort, and Albert Edward had substantial cause to bless the sagacity of the father who had been his tyrant. The revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall, which belonged by inheritance to the Prince of Wales and which had been dissipated by the last holder of that title, had been so judiciously nursed by the Prince Consort that when his son became twenty-one years of age he found himself in possession of a lump sum of economies amounting to £600,000 and an annual revenue of £60,000. In London Marlborough House, a Crown property, had been put in order against the time of the projected marriage, and before the Consort's death the estate of Sandringham in Norfolk had been acquired to provide a country residence for the Prince and Princess of Wales. The young couple had only to take possession, for the dead Prince, with his frightful thoroughness, had prepared for every immediate contingency.

Parliament voted an annuity of £40,000 to the Prince of Wales

on his marriage, with a similar allowance of £10,000 to his wife. This was an astronomical figure for the Danish princess to contemplate, but her gentle heart was equally touched by the 'People's Dowry' of 100,000 crowns which the humble people of Denmark united to give her. There were moving scenes in Copenhagen when Prince Christian and his family set out for England, as the citizens pressed about the bride and wished her well. On the other side of the North Sea the people of Britain waited with an interest made vocal by the Laureate, Mr. Tennyson, in a remarkably bad poem, and by the cheers of a throng which had assembled, on a wild March day, to see some inadequate decorations and strips of bunting, and a pale, slender girl, scarcely recovered from the crossing, escorted by the heir to the throne. It was the first royal procession for many months and London made the most of it, for the Queen had insisted that the wedding ceremony should take place in St. George's Chapel at Windsor.

Getting the Queen ready for the occasion proved to be the chief task of her devoted family, for her nerves were utterly unequal to the strain, and with all her goodwill towards this marriage which Albert had approved she felt in her heart that it was a personal insult when anybody dared to be happy. The congratulations, the joybells, the whole wedding atmosphere of mirth and jocularly was uncongenial to her, and to see her daughters with their husbands (for in the meantime Alice had been married, very quietly, to Prince Louis of Hesse) was a constant reminder that she had lost her own. Vicky and Fritz had arrived from Berlin with their children, and Prince Wilhelm showed by his riotous conduct that he was still the obstreperous baby who had torn his caps and scratched his face and made every sort of extraordinary noise. He went for a drive with one of his aunts and threw her muff out of the carriage; and he tyrannized over the other nursery people. His Uncle Leopold was ten years old, his Aunt Beatrice six, while Alexandra's youngest sister and brother, Thyra and Waldemar, were ten and five respectively, but Wilhelm of Prussia, aged four, was a match for them all.

The wedding, which took place on March 10th, was attended by all the dignitaries of the realm and by three outstanding personalities. The first of these was of course the Queen, who refused to seat herself in the chancel with her family and occupied the Royal Closet from which she could see the whole ceremony without taking part in it.

She could be seen by most of the congregation, few of whom failed to record the thrill of almost superstitious awe which ran through the Chapel at the sight of the small figure with the black weeds slashed by the blue of the Garter ribbon, and the upward roll of her eyes at the opening chords of her husband's chorale. The arrival of the bridegroom did not divert much of the company's attention from the Queen. The Prince, who wore the Garter robes over a General's uniform, looked well enough in a short, thick-set way, but he was not, he never was, sufficiently striking to compete with the majesty of the solitary woman who looked down at him with tears in her eyes.

The second personality was the bride herself, who from the moment of her appearance in the Chapel held the eyes of all by her enchanting grace. The lace crinoline billowed round a form still immature, and under the orange blossoms the sweet downcast face, half hidden by the bridal veil, gave promise of a beauty such as neither Victoria nor her daughters, nor the robust German consorts of earlier kings, had brought to the British royal house.

The third personality was neither awe-inspiring nor beautiful, but was none the less a strong one. Prince Wilhelm of Prussia was present at his Uncle Bertie's wedding and had been allowed to join the little group of his young uncles as they stood near their brother. His mother had put this little German boy into the Highland dress which he always enjoyed wearing; it seemed as if the gay tartan and the swinging kilt compensated him for the feeble left arm of which he was becoming acutely conscious. Thus attired, and simmering with excitement, little Wilhelm had an irresistible desire to draw the attention of the multitude away from Uncle Bertie to himself. Wherefore he indulged in a variety of tricks, such as taking the cairngorm from his little *skean-dhu* and throwing it across the choir until Leopold and Arthur were nearly mad with annoyance and the need to restrain him quietly. Nor were they entirely successful, for when, after the ceremony, the Queen asked if their nephew had been good, they replied indignantly, 'Oh Mama, he was *biting* us all the time!'

But Bertie and Alix had no attention to spare for Wilhelm that day. They drove off into the spring twilight with a last bow and kiss for the weeping Queen, and little Princess Thyra was very shocked to see her big sister going away without her Mama.

When they came back to town from Osborne the season was about to begin and the Prince of Wales, almost incredulous of his good fortune, realized that he now possessed the complete liberty he had so long desired. Papa was gone: a pious word, a lowering of the voice, sufficed to honour his memory. Mama was shut up at Windsor, engrossed in affairs of State and in her abnormal preoccupation with the memory of her husband. Stockmar died in July, and went where no reports are read. Even General Bruce had ceased from troubling and Sir William Knollys, in spite of his age and his discipline, was courtier enough to be a successful Comptroller. Presently his son Francis was to become the Prince's much trusted Private Secretary and his daughter Charlotte the Princess's Bedchamber Woman. The Knollys hierarchy was in process of foundation and the familiar names of his reign began to appear as the Prince appointed a Wood to be his Groom of the Bedchamber and a Keppel as an equerry. He was godfather to the son of one of his earliest equerries, Major Charles Grey: in 1863 little Edward Grey was unaware of the problems he would have to solve as Foreign Secretary in the reign of Edward VII.

He had lost his tyrants and found his slaves, and at the age of twenty-one was the husband of one of the most beautiful girls in Europe and the master of two magnificent homes and £100,000 a year. It was no wonder that so much good fortune acted upon him as overfeeding acts upon a starving man. Now it was the Guildhall Banquet, now the Guards' Ball, now the private entertainments of his royal kinsmen and his mother's Ministers — the golden evenings of the season swept by, and he came swiftly to know his London as he had never known it before — this expanding city, this noisier, faster, richer city than the city of his birth. And London laughed to see the boy and girl drive past, flushed with pleasure; that was what royalty should be like, handsome and reckless, spending money for the good of the people and enjoying the summer weather. The silky curls that lay on Alexandra's neck launched the first of the fashions *à la* Princess of Wales: she learned to set them off with such rich earrings and necklaces as had never been seen in Copenhagen. But her thoughts turned back there often enough for all her London triumphs. She was tired before the season ended, for there was already the prospect of a second heir to the throne, and she was the prey of a disquiet that overshadowed the first freshness of her

happiness. For the Schleswig-Holstein Question was becoming extremely acute.

Now this problem, which appears insignificant beside the violent diplomatic quarrels which followed, was nevertheless of the first importance in the life of the Prince of Wales. It clarified his official relations with his mother. It affected his friendly relations with his elder sister. It seriously altered his attitude to Prussia — if that which was so fluid as his previous state of mind could be called an attitude. From the time when the Schleswig-Holstein Question was settled by force of arms the Prince of Wales became a politician.

At the time of his marriage it was inevitable that he should not be taken very seriously by serious men. There had been too many silly stories about his backwardness and too many observers of his inadequacy as a conversationalist. But some people had noticed that, as General Bruce had once grudgingly admitted, he 'always succeeded in representation and while in movement'. It was also noted that, while his distaste for book-learning was notorious, he had a remarkable aural memory and never forgot what he heard. He developed very much during the first summer of his marriage and had he been allowed to share thenceforward in the work of government would soon have been able to prove his real talent for diplomacy. But it is certain that his first essays would have been contrary to the opinions of his father and hence to the will of the Queen.

The wedding of the Princess Alexandra had been the signal for great rejoicings in Copenhagen. Bells rang from all the churches with their copper steeples stained to green by the sea air, and the King gave an entertainment to all his subjects. But three weeks later, when the wedding excitement was over, he issued a proclamation repudiating the settlement of 1852 and negating the German claims to the Duchy of Holstein. This naturally roused the wrath of the Germanic Confederation.

The Danish Government had chosen the moment for their show of independence with some care. Russia was preoccupied with the Polish revolution and France by the ill-starred adventure in Mexico. There was reason to hope that Britain, the traditional champion of small nations, would come to the aid of Denmark if need be. It might be possible, and during the summer of 1863 it seemed that it was possible, to bluff that incoherent body, the Germanic

Confederation. But one member of the Confederation was bluffing rather than bluffed — the increasingly powerful state of Prussia.

Now the Prussian technique does not vary. It is expressed differently accordingly as the practitioner is Frederick the Great, Bismarck, Wilhelm II or Hitler, but the basis is always the same. Opportunism, divide-and-govern, broken faith and force of arms — these are the elements of the Prussian creed, simple and devoid of surprise. The only surprising thing is the way in which the rest of Europe is invariably taken aback and incredulous each time it is treated to a demonstration of Prussianism.

The Germanic Confederation was feeling uneasy about Prussia in the spring of 1863, for Wilhelm I, at Bismarck's instigation, had refused to attend the Congress of Princes which met at Frankfurt to reform the constitution. By his absence, of course, he made himself appear to be more alarming than he could have done by his presence — tactics reminiscent of Hitler's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933 — and the other German states, particularly Austria, awaited the next move in some anxiety.

Denmark moved first. The solution of the problem was so simple — the retention of Schleswig and the granting of a measure of independence to Holstein under the Danish Crown, that the King was not unreasonable in following up his proclamation of March with a new constitution for 'our kingdom of Denmark-Schleswig', but two days after its promulgation, on November 13th, he died. The father of the Princess of Wales ascended the throne in right of his wife, and put his signature to the new constitution as Christian IX.

This was the signal for a general upheaval. The Duke of Augustenburg, whose father had renounced his rights to the Duchy of Holstein, came forward to claim those rights to himself. The German inhabitants of the Duchy raised a clamour for inclusion in the Germanic Confederation — an early example of the 'ethnological minorities' and 'persecuted German communities' of the next century. Prussia pointed out that the infringement of the settlement of 1852 was a *casus belli* and insisted that Saxon and Hanoverian troops should occupy Holstein in the name of the Confederation. This was done on December 24th and Frederick of Augustenburg solemnly proclaimed himself Duke. But Bismarck regarded him as the merest pawn in the game. Annexation of both the Duchies, and to Prussia, was the goal he kept steadily before his eyes.

To achieve this he had to make the Danes go to war. It was one thing to occupy Holstein which positively welcomed occupation; it was another thing to make Denmark proper engage in hostilities. She would only challenge Prussia if she could expect help from outside, and that help she hoped to get from Britain. There were a great many rumours about British intervention, and the Danes believed them. It was not realized until too late that the rumours had been spread by Bismarck's agents. How should honest folk believe any such thing? Had not Bismarck himself formally promised, just after Prussia and Austria had agreed to take action not as members of the Confederation but as separate powers, to recognize provisionally the integrity of Denmark?

The Danes were not to blame. Seventy years after this date more powerful nations than theirs had still failed to realize that when Germany recognizes a country's integrity that country should look well to its frontiers.

But was there any real hope of help from Britain? Lord Palmerston had made a speech in Parliament about 'the independence, the integrity and the rights of Denmark', saying, 'that if any violent attempt were made to overthrow those rights, and interfere with that independence, those who made the attempt would find in the result that it would not be Denmark alone with which they would have to contend'.

These were words which brought comfort to the Princess of Wales as they brought encouragement to her native land, but Lord Palmerston's voice was not the only voice in England. The voice of Albert was heard from beyond the grave, like that other statesman of whom it was said —

'O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!
Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords
In our own proper entrails,'

and Albert's Calpurnia approached the Schleswig-Holstein Question from his point of view. 'I know,' said she, 'that our dear Angel Albert always regarded a strong Prussia as a necessity, for which therefore it is a sacred duty for me to work.' Against that influence what words of her son and daughter-in-law could prevail? What she had feared had happened, and Bertie was under the influence of his wife: again and again he urged the plight of Denmark, but Bertie was easy to

handle. One simply refused him access to any State papers, any secret information, and allowed him to read the news from Denmark in *The Times* like any private citizen — that would teach Bertie his place in the great scheme of things. This family upset was most disagreeable, and it was not helped by Vicky, who was full of self-importance and boasting about the new Prussia. She wrote on January 5th, 1864, to say that her thoughts and sympathies were with Fritz Augustenburg. 'I hope dearest Alix does not feel too much about it all,' she irritatingly continued, 'King Christian has himself to thank for the fix he is in — why did he accept and allow himself to be put in a place not rightfully his own? He might now be living in peace and quiet.' Alexandra forgot that she had to be grateful to her sister-in-law, and flared up on behalf of her father and his country. The Queen, caring nothing for Alexandra's politics, but a great deal for Alexandra's health, tried to soothe her, but the mischief was done. A delicate baby, prematurely born at Frogmore, came wailing into the world on January 8th, and was named Albert Victor for his illustrious grandparents.

So that was Alexandra *hors de combat*, for a time at least, and the Queen could urge her pro-Prussian policy on her Ministers, and finally see it triumph. She had the advantage of a considerable peace party in the Cabinet, which was distressed by the outbreak of real hostilities on February 1st when a joint Prussian and Austrian army invaded Schleswig, crossed the Jutland frontier and proceeded to invest the fortress of Düppel. The peace party, no less than the Queen, spoke of the importance of keeping Britain out of a Continental war, and of the need to appease Prussia, and neither they nor she realized that Albert's policy was indeed turning the sword of England in its own vitals. But others suspected it, as when in far-away St. Petersburg Lord Napier received a cipher message from England. It was a young Lord Redesdale who deciphered the instructions for the ambassador — they were clear enough — Gortschakoff must be told that Britain would not intervene on behalf of Denmark.

Napier started for Tsarskoe Selo in a fury of disappointment and was not surprised when the Russian minister said drily, 'Then, milord, I can put aside the supposition that Britain will ever go to war on a point of honour'. These were bitter words, and Gortschakoff followed them up by definite action. He reorientated his policy to preclude

the idea of an Anglo-Russian *entente* and Bismarck was given that which every German tyrant must desire — freedom from the fear of an attack from the East.

The fortress of Düppel fell to the Prussians in April, and the troops, whom Bismarck had been drilling and disciplining for two years, swept on with precision into the island of Alsen, where farmers and peasants snatched up scythes and pruning hooks and died fighting for their homes. Sonderburg was reduced by a brutal bombardment which roused the execration — if nothing else — of Great Britain and called forth the championship of the Crown Princess of Prussia. The Crown Princess was very much a soldier's wife at this time, for her husband was with the army as a Lieutenant-General. 'I can see nothing inhuman or improper in any way in the bombardment of Sonderburg,' wrote Vicky on April 13th. 'It was necessary and we hope it has been useful.'

After the last stand at Alsen the Danes sued for peace, and were compelled to give up the two duchies. The Duke of Augustenburg now found that he was no nearer the possession of Holstein than before, for Schleswig and Holstein passed into the joint possession of Prussia and Austria — an arrangement in which Bismarck saw endless possibilities of friction with his partner which should give him the excuse for his next war. It also gave Prussia her future naval base at Kiel. Christian IX was the king of a despoiled kingdom, and when his daughter and her husband visited him in October they were much moved by the tale of Danish suffering. It was hard, after that, to encounter Vicky and Fritz Wilhelm, flown with triumph, at Cologne on the return journey. The Prince of Wales wrote to Lord Spencer, 'I can assure you it was not pleasant to see him and his A.D.C. always in Prussian uniform flaunting before our eyes a most objectionable ribbon which he received for his *deeds of valour*??? against the unhappy Danes'.

The victorious Germans, however, were not altogether happy. The Crown Princess of Prussia, as well as finding herself alienated from her brother, was in disgrace with the people of Berlin, who muttered that she was not sufficiently delighted at — that she positively regretted — the successes of the Prussian troops. This was to be the curse of Albert's best pupil — that she was to make herself disliked in both England and Prussia. As for the Augustenburg family, they were sorely disappointed, although Prince Christian,

the Duke's younger brother, received a consolation prize two years later in the hand of Princess Helena of Great Britain.

The conquered Danes set to work with energy to rebuild their diminished kingdom. King Christian, deprived of his duchies, was consoled by the prospect of new spheres of influence elsewhere, for his daughter Dagmar had become engaged to the Czarevitch Nicholas and his second son William had been elected to the vacant throne of Greece. He was crowned at Athens in October 1864, and was almost immediately plunged into a dispute with Turkey over the ownership of Crete, in which the Prince of Wales vigorously supported him. Albert Edward was taking his first steps in politics, and so far, as was very natural, he was the champion of his wife's interests. But the Schleswig-Holstein Question had opened his eyes to two things: first, that his mother had no intention of taking him into her confidence, and second that the Prussian spirit, given free rein, brought suffering to the weak and dangerous vainglory to its possessors. In the seven years between his marriage and the Franco-Prussian War these two discoveries considerably affected his outlook. His mother's attitude drove him still farther along those paths of pleasure which he had found so attractive in the early days at Marlborough House. But interwoven with his easy life was a threat of gravity: his observation, growing yearly more acute and more mature, of the European scene and the carefully planned emergence of the German Empire.

CHAPTER VIII

PARIS, 1870

By the time the Schleswig-Holstein Question was settled in 1864 it was generally felt that Queen Victoria's period of mourning for her husband had been excessively long, and that she ought either to emerge from her seclusion and restore the social and commercial benefits of a regular Court life or abdicate in favour of the Prince whose popularity had so remarkably increased in London. She herself toyed occasionally with the idea of abdication and more often still prophesied her own speedy demise. 'I think my life will end *more rapidly* than any of you think', she wrote once. 'For myself this would be the *greatest, greatest* blessing; but for the poor children I feel a few years more would be desirable, and for the country, I own, it alarms me still more'. In other words, she was not prepared to hand over her kingdom to a young man whom she could not trust. At the same time, she resolutely denied Albert Edward the means of winning her trust, and proving, in some position of responsibility, that he was capable of good judgment and application. By 1865 his powers had greatly developed, and his political thought was becoming sustained and original. He was more widely travelled than any of Her Majesty's Ministers, and his astonishing gift for pleasing people and winning their confidence was increasing with every social occasion and every private European journey. Still his mother barred him from her Privy Council, forbade him private interviews with her Ministers, and steadily refused his every request for such definite work as his brothers had. The fourth brother, Leopold, was a confirmed invalid, suffering from the mysterious disease which has so often appeared in the royal houses of Europe, but Prince Alfred in the Navy and Prince Arthur in the Army had their professions and followed them very well. Only the Prince of Wales, with so many natural advantages and gifts of fortune, was that most pitiable of beings, an unemployed man.

In such a situation it was no wonder that his bent for pleasure, starved for so long, was soon indulged to the full. In a few glorious years he recompensed himself for his repressed childhood and over-

driven adolescence, and incidentally laid the foundations of a reputation for light, not to say loose, living which was to dog him for the rest of his days. London life in the late sixties was admirably suited to a young man of wealth and charm with a lot of leeway to make up in self-indulgence. The tide of American invaders had not yet swamped society, thanks to the Civil War, but the increase of riches and means of locomotion was teaching native Londoners new methods of enjoyment, and in all of these the Prince and Princess of Wales took the lead. When they appeared in their carriage, the uncrowned King and Queen of fashion, London hastened to greet them, and though after one of her very rare public appearances Victoria rather spitefully noted in her journal that of course the people had run to see her as they never ran for Bertie and Alix, their motive was curiosity rather than love. Less biassed observers noted that the cheering was usually 'much greater for the Wales couple' than for the Queen.

In Scotland, and in middle-class provincial England, the Queen's popularity was still considerable. Her abysmal woe for Albert was considered to show very proper feeling, and heads were shaken over the gossip about the wild Prince which was beginning to circulate. But as time went on the Queen herself became the subject of malicious talk. Her Highland servant, John Brown, was becoming a very privileged character: he addressed his royal mistress with a familiarity which none of her Ministers would have dared to assume, and the evilly-disposed asked how, if these were his manners in public, did Mr. Brown conduct himself when he and the Queen were alone, which they not infrequently were?

One might as well suspect Cleopatra's Needle of frivolity as imagine anything wrong in the relations between the Queen and the Scotsman. In the first place he had been part of her cult of Albert. He had been for twelve years in their service before the Consort died, and he could talk to her, in the plain blunt way which no one else dared to use when speaking of the departed, of their mutual memories of the Consort in that happiest of all settings, the mountain freedom and fresh winds of Deeside. Imperceptibly, John Brown became more important to her than he had ever been in Albert's lifetime. Widowed at forty-two, her luxuriant femininity still craved male strength and male overlordship, and while she was determined that neither her children nor her Ministers should ever dictate to her, the parent

and sovereign, she appreciated John Brown's bluff advice on her dress, exercise and general deportment. His influence was in reality a healthy one, for it led her back, though by very slow degrees, to normality, but the British public, never well-versed in psychology, saw only a rude Aberdeenshire peasant in a very ambiguous situation, and snorted that if the Queen wanted masculine support she should send for the Prince of Wales. So the mother and son both became unpopular, she because she went out too little and he because he went out too much; nor did the newspapers of the day hesitate to reprobate them both. *Punch* and *The Times* had long been critics of the monarchy, and now to their more respectable squibs was added the clamour of the notorious *Tomahawk*, whose cartoons became the talk of the town. One of these depicted George IV as the Ghost of the King of Denmark, with the Prince of Wales, as Hamlet, saying prophetically 'I'll follow thee!' If the Queen saw that, she might have groaned over the persistent shadow of the Hanoverians, but she too came under the lash, for another drawing, called simply 'A Brown Study', showed the faithful John leaning nonchalantly upon the throne itself.

Queen Victoria was an expert at eating her cake and having it too. Denying her son an outlet for his energies in useful employment, she raged when those energies found an outlet in pleasure. Terrible stories reached Windsor: the Prince of Wales, whose Papa had abhorred smoking and who had used to smoke furtively behind the shrubbery at Frewen Hall, now not only smoked fat cigars after dinner but had actually founded a club — the Marlborough — conveniently adjacent to his home, where the rules of the older clubs, as regards smoking and other habits, were agreeably relaxed. He drove about London in hired cabs, so as to reach his various destinations with more speed and privacy, and he frequented race meetings. At regular intervals his indefatigable parent besought him to give up the latter diversion. Even to Ascot, the principal meeting of the season, she asked him to go only on the Tuesday and Thursday and not on the Wednesday and Friday as well, adducing the somewhat insufficient reason that William IV had never gone on these days. To which the Prince wearily replied, 'I fear, dear Mama, that no year goes round without your giving me a jobation on the subject of racing. . . . As I am past twenty-eight and have some considerable knowledge of the world and society, you will, I am sure, at least

I trust, allow me to use my own discretion in matters of this kind'.

But it was not racing alone which drew forth the royal 'jobations' and the Queen had the support of the elder members of her family in her attempts to tame Bertie. Thus in 1864 the Duke of Cambridge, the Commander-in-Chief, asked his cousin the Queen to allow the Prince to appear more often at Aldershot, so as to bind the Army more firmly to the Crown, and added inevitably, 'I would wish to see the Prince occupy his mind a little with matters not merely connected with amusement'. But the Queen did not wish to see her son at Aldershot, any more than she could agree to his discussing affairs of State with her Ministers. She as little approved of his frequent visits to the Continent, whether escorting his wife to Fredensborg, the castle beyond Copenhagen which became the rallying place of King Christian's family, or visiting Paris — without his wife. In 1866 he proposed a still longer journey — to Russia for the marriage of his sister-in-law. The Czarewitch Nicholas, who had been betrothed to Dagmar of Denmark, had died before the wedding took place, and after a decent interval the girl was to marry his brother, the Czarewitch Alexander — for thus, noted the Prince of Wales, royal marriages were sometimes arranged. He gained his point, and set off for St. Petersburg, though his mother lamented that her wish was to see him 'remaining a *little* quiet at home and not always running about. The country, and all of *us*, would like to see you a little more stationary'.

The Queen, who had never ridden in a train until after her marriage, failed to see that her son was a child of the Machine Age. Even her husband's careful plans for his upbringing had contributed to his restlessness, for a boy who has travelled East and West and gone up and down Europe is not likely to turn into a home-keeping man. Moreover the Prince had a natural love of movement. He was a good traveller by land or sea, and never lost his interest in new towns, new friends and strange languages. His mother, who exhorted him to gather round himself 'really good, steady and distinguished people', could not understand that he had had enough of such companions at the White Lodge, at Frewen and at Madingley to last for a lifetime. What he wanted now was people who could make him laugh.

His new home, though infinitely happier and more cheerful than his old, did not entirely satisfy his longing for new sensations and

ALBERT EDWARD

new amusements. If he had had to do a hard day's work in some national department, the pleasures of his domestic happiness might well have sufficed for his hours of leisure. But when his life was virtually all leisure, he required more stimulus. He was married to one of the most beautiful princesses in Europe and he was devoted to her — but — there were so many beautiful women, and all so eager to please him! As the first years of his marriage passed, he became vaguely conscious of the lack of something in Alexandra. She had beauty, charm, dignity and a lovely sympathy with the poor and needy, but she was not a politician. And her husband, maturing late, taking his first tentative steps in diplomacy as he went from capital to capital, could sometimes have wished that in addition to all her other qualities Alix had had a keen brain like Vicky, or even — it was a strange thought — like Mama.

In 1865 their second child was born, again prematurely, and the Queen, still haunted by the Hanoverians, was exercised over his name. 'I fear I cannot admire the names you propose to give the Baby', she wrote to the Prince. 'George only came over with the Hanoverian family. However, if the dear child grows up good and wise I shall not mind what his name is.' Twenty months later was born a third child, Princess Louise, who was followed in 1868 by the Princess Victoria and in 1869 by the Princess Maud. It was after the birth of Louise in February 1867 that the Princess of Wales had a long and serious illness, complicated by a painful affection of the leg which in time became a limp, and her parents were summoned to her side. The Prince of Wales was a good deal from home in the early summer months, while Queen Louise watched over her daughter — there was an Exhibition in Paris, and he went there officially and unofficially to enjoy what were to be the last gaieties of the Second Empire. Queen Victoria noted drily in her journal that 'the King of Denmark came to say goodbye. He seemed low and unhappy about his daughter'. It was the inevitable language of relatives-in-law: the Princess of Wales was for the time being 'the King of Denmark's daughter' and not the 'dear Alix' of earlier days.

The young *ménage*, however, grew happy again, and in the spring of the following year the Prince of Wales was all anxiety to take his wife to Ireland with him, for his installation as a Knight of St. Patrick in the Cathedral at Dublin. He had long wished to identify himself more closely with John Bull's other island — an idea much favoured

by Gladstone — but the Queen would not hear of it. That shrewd observer, Lady Augusta Stanley (for General Bruce's sister was now the wife of Dean Stanley), often wished that the Queen had settled on some Irish beauty-spot, instead of Deeside, for her holiday home. 'The ecstasies and interests that would have grown up would have been just as great,' she thought, and how much more good it would have done! The Scots gave the Crown no trouble, whereas the Irish....! It would indeed have been more expedient to have flattered the Irish by holidaying among them, but then the Queen was never swayed by mere expedient. 'I have been taught, my Lord,' she said to one of her Prime Ministers, 'to judge between what is right and what is wrong, but *expediency* is a word I neither wish to hear again nor to understand.'

Accordingly she would neither visit Ireland herself nor permit her son to have a house in one of the Irish hunting counties, which Disraeli suggested as a *faute de mieux* for the Lord Lieutenantcy. 'I believe,' remarked Lady Augusta, 'she is so afraid lest any of them should be taken up by, or take up the Irish so as to throw Balmoral into the shade, now or later.'

Certainly there was no immediate danger of the royal family being taken up by the Irish. The Fenians were becoming increasingly truculent, and when the Queen was at Balmoral in 1867 she received a telegram warning her that a party of Fenians had set out from Manchester to seize her person. Her entourage besought her to give up her almost solitary drives on the lonely hill roads, but the Queen, who lacked none of the proverbial 'Guelph courage', refused to alter her way of living, and dismissed the warning as 'too foolish'. Before very long it was evident that the Irish extremists were not always to be treated with contempt. In March 1868 Prince Alfred, while in Australia, was shot by a Fenian — naturally in the back. It was an inauspicious prelude to the Prince of Wales' visit to Dublin in the following month, but nevertheless Fenian prisoners were released from gaol in honour of the occasion, and the Queen's chief anxiety was not for her son's safety but that his visit was timed to coincide with the Punchestown Races which, she said, 'would naturally strengthen the belief, already far too prevalent, that his chief object was amusement'. The Prince replied with some ingenuity that he was only going to the races by the way, so that more people would have an opportunity of seeing him.

He and the Princess had a great personal success in Dublin, but it was not sufficient to solve the Irish question. Three years later the Fenians attempted to blow up the new statue of the Prince Consort in Dublin — a mortal insult to the Queen, which she never forgave. The Prince of Wales saw that he was powerless to effect any *rapprochement* between the Crown and the people of Ireland. If he was to make himself useful anywhere, it would be on the Continent.

Paris was still his favourite capital, and as the waltz-beat of the Second Empire quickened to its Dance of Death the Prince of Wales was often to be seen there — sometimes at Compiègne or the Tuileries with the Imperial couple, sometimes supping on the boulevards with his friend the Marquis de Gallifet, sometimes in less exalted company. In March 1865 he had received a special envoy from the Emperor, who invested him with the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour, to his great delight: he was beginning to take a keen interest in decorations, and had by now a fair collection, but the honour instituted by Napoleon I pleased him most of all. He wore it when he went to Paris in 1867 for the opening of the great Exhibition with which the Emperor hoped to distract attention from one weakness of his foreign policy — that was in May, and Louis Napoleon was insistent that he should return for the distribution of prizes at the end of June. This he did, but the grand finale was spoilt by the news from Mexico, where the Emperor Maximilian had been shot at Queretaro. The Empress was already mad: she had been Charlotte of Belgium, the pretty cousin whom the Prince of Wales had met while she was on her honeymoon when Maximilian was only an Austrian Archduke who had never heard of Benito Juarez. The news cast a gloom over the court of the Tuileries, and the Prince of Wales lost some of his gaiety. He had been very gay that summer in Paris: Hortense Schneider was playing lead in *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein*, and amused stage-hands sometimes saw the Prince clambering over piles of scenery and canvas flats to get to her *loge* without delay.

Next year he was back in Paris undersomewhat different auspices, for he and his Princess went to stay at Compiègne at the beginning of the long journey through the Near East which was arranged for Alexandra's health and amusement after the birth of the Princess Victoria. This visit in November 1868 did something to repair the

harm done by Queen Victoria, who had passed through Paris earlier that year, and who had failed to return the formal visit of the Empress Eugénie, although the latter opened the Elysée Palace specially to receive her, that the older lady might have less far to go. The Queen stayed in the British Embassy, whose barred doors offended the people of Paris, and when she drove away at last there were hisses and cries of '*A bas les Anglais!*' The enemies of the dynasty whispered that the Queen's attitude proved that she considered Eugénie a *parvenue*: it all contributed to the growing tension in Paris, and the Prince of Wales, both on his way East and on his return journey in 1869, addressed himself to smoothing out these difficulties.

He foresaw that France might shortly be in trouble on her eastern frontier, where Prussia was organizing herself more than ever on a military basis. Bismarck had soon been able to trump up a cause of war with Austria, and embarked upon the Seven Weeks' War in 1866. At the beginning of this enterprise the Prussian royal family trembled for the consequences, since Austria was not an easy prey like Denmark, and the Crown Princess wrote pathetically that 'Not a day passes that the wicked man does not with the *greatest* ability counteract and thwart what is good and drive us towards war, turning and twisting everything to serve his own purpose'. But she became triumphant again as Bismarck's legions swept on to a speedy victory, and Queen Victoria, reading her letters and pondering the map of Europe, began to wonder if Albert had been right about Prussia. That was heresy, Albert was always right; but still, if God had spared him till 1866, might he not have changed his mind? There was Alice, writing in great distress from Darmstadt of the brutal and bullying conduct of the Prussian troops quartered in the Hessian capital, there was her poor kinsman of Hanover driven from his throne as Hanover and Saxony fell under the suzerainty of Prussia, and there, above all, was the hypocrisy of Wilhelm I as he wrote to explain, in words which have a sickeningly familiar ring, that Prussia had entered on the war because her very existence was at stake.

There was little the Queen could do about it except to decide that her daughter Louise (subsequently the wife of the Marquis of Lorne) should not marry a Prussian Prince, as had been proposed, since the alliances with Denmark, Hesse and Prussia had only brought family quarrels and European embarrassments.

That was in 1869 and a year later the Queen was thrown into a fresh confusion of spirit as Bismarck, with a happy Teutonic blend of lying and forgery, completed his trilogy and opened the Franco-Prussian War. The glamour which Napoleon III had exercised over Victoria had long since worn away, and in the fourteen years since the Crimea the Anglo-French Alliance had lost its popularity in both countries, so that Bismarck was right when he calculated that the long animosity between France and Britain would prevent a renewal of the alliance against Prussia. To begin with there was a definite pro-Prussian sentiment in Britain. It was so natural to turn against a Bonaparte, so natural to regard the Prussian as part of the same Anglo-Saxon race! The Queen herself supported Prussia, though with a few mental reservations, and her Ministers hastened to publish the neutrality of Britain.

Alone in high places the Prince of Wales championed, in season and out of season, the cause of France. For fifteen years he had been devoted to the land and the friend of its ruler, and he viewed with horror the prospect of a French defeat. It was said that when at a dinner at the French Embassy he had told Apponyi, the Austrian Ambassador, that he hoped Austria would join France and Prussia be defeated. He subsequently denied this statement, but it gained much credence in Europe. It is certain that when his elder sister began to whine about the strength of the French army, he commented bitterly to his mother that now perhaps the Prussians would realize what the feelings of little Denmark must have been.

Schleswig-Holstein still stuck in his throat, but there was no need for Prussia to dread the fate of Denmark. Bismarck had done his work too well for that. Soon the Crown Princess was exulting over the 'grand and imposing' enthusiasm for the war. 'There is something so pure and elevated about it,' she said, 'so sacred and calm and serious — that when I see our finest and noblest men all joining and collecting round their aged sovereign, they seem to be indeed "the noble army of martyrs".'

But it was the French who were cast for the martyrs' role, and as Fritz Wilhelm and the Red Prince joined Bismarck and Von Moltke, thundering across the Rhine into Alsace-Lorraine, where the ailing Emperor and a cluster of incompetent generals fumbled with strategy, the Prince of Wales chafed in hopeless inactivity. He was at Abergeldie that August, supposed to be enjoying the Deeside air, with his

heart far away on the battlefields of France, and he wrote passionately to the Queen, 'I cannot bear sitting here and doing nothing, whilst all this bloodshed is going on. How I wish you would send me with letters to the Emperor and King of Prussia with friendly advice, even if it ultimately failed'. Simultaneously his sister Vicky was writing smugly to say, 'I am sure dear Bertie must envy Fritz, who has such a trying but such a useful life'. Bertie might well have been tempted to shout that he envied Fritz nothing — not even his Iron Cross — but he was voiceless, helpless; he had to sit at Abergeldie while the harvest moon looked over Lochnagar and silvered the field of Sedan.

His friends were scattered and in flight: the Emperor a prisoner in Germany, the Empress a refugee in England, and his offer of Chiswick House as a harbour for the unhappy Eugénie was vetoed by the Queen as 'a presumptuous indiscretion'. The Prussian Ambassador refused to transmit to his master his personal request for the release of his old friend de Gallifet, and Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, forbade him to send corn to France to relieve the famine of that terrible winter. All these rebuffs he had to bear, while Vicky's song of triumph rose to a paean of exultation — 120,000 French prisoners in Germany — more than fifty Generals and the Sovereign himself — like passages from *Henry V* and *Richard II* — the King to be German Emperor and Fritz and herself Imperial Highnesses — Vicky had reached her apotheosis.

It was a black time which taught the Prince of Wales self-control. Alone with his wife he gave rein to his feelings; in public he was cool and correct, while his beloved Paris suffered and starved behind Thiers' old fortifications and the *francs-tireurs* haunted the winter woods. He even restrained himself from saying 'I told you so' when Prince Gortschakoff struck a blow for his new policy by repudiating those clauses of the Treaty of Paris of 1856, which neutralized the Black Sea. 'I very much fear that Prussia stands in with her,' he said, and he was right. Again he asked for action, again the Liberal Government refused. A conference was held at London which, largely through German insistence, agreed to the new Russian policy. This was another consequence of the failure to help Denmark and the aggrandisement of Prussia.

That he had himself well in hand is evident from the testimony of Lady Augusta Stanley who, having always been sceptical of the

French, was at pains to tell him that a friend of hers had much admired the correct deportment of the Prussian troops on entering Paris. There were varying accounts of that same entry, but the Prince did not argue. 'He gave no indication of his own sentiments, and was very amiable' noted Lady Augusta; and, in fact, the frank young man was learning the wiles of the diplomat — to dissemble and to wait.

Lady Augusta received another gratifying account of a Prussian triumphal entry, this time into Berlin, from the lips of the twelve-year-old Prince Wilhelm of Prussia when she saw him in Germany next spring. His mother was very proud of her son, and still found him like his Uncle — she had told the Queen not long before that he had 'Bertie's pleasant, amiable ways' and could be very winning. His eagerness about the Prussian troops contrasted sharply with his uncle's reticence, but it was natural in a child, who had been immensely impressed by the sight of his grandfather and Prince Bismarck receiving the salutes of the victors. 'The people — his own future subjects — had been so joyful, and 'the flowers came sailing down from the third and fourth stories of the houses, so that at last you could see nothing of the soldiers but their bayonets'.

Thus the child, drugged by victory, in whose excitable brain was already forming an image of war as the gateway to glory, where the bloodstains on a field-gray uniform could be hidden under a rain of flowers.

PART TWO

THE PRINCE OF WALES

*Si nous n'aimons guère
Tes mufles de sujets,
Edouard, mon vieux frère,
Toi tu nous allais . . .
Combien il nous tarde
De t'voir revenir,
Car Paris te garde
Un bon souvenir!*

DARAGON: *Voyage à Paris de S.M. Edouard VII, 1903*

CHAPTER I

DELHI, 1875

FOR some time a visit to Paris was out of the question, since the volatile French were engaging with zestful incoherence in the formation of the Third Republic, and the Prince of Wales was going through a troubled time at home. The longing to be useful was strong upon him as he entered his thirtieth year. All the public works with which he had occupied himself since his marriage seemed to him to have been the merest trifling, and yet they made a formidable list, for he had seldom denied himself to any body which had asked for his presence or his help.

In the medical and educational developments of the time he had shown a constant interest. He was president of the governing body of Wellington College, which had been one of his father's pet schemes, and president of the governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital. He had laid the foundation stone of the London Hospital in 1864. One of his earliest appointments was as president of the Royal Society of Arts, and he had sat on innumerable commissions in connexion with the Royal Albert Hall, another massive tribute to his father's memory. He was a regular attender at committee meetings, and invariably showed a complete grasp of the business in hand—for the Prince of Wales, apparently the antithesis of his father, had nevertheless inherited the Consort's business sense and love of order. He was good at committees and he was particularly good at Exhibitions.

The extension and embellishment of London, which he loved, he was always ready to encourage. Captivated by the broad boulevards and wide spaces of Paris, he was anxious to see the prospering capital planning similar expansions, and made many useful suggestions about the clearing and rearrangement of Hyde Park Corner. In 1870 he opened the new Thames Embankment, perhaps comparing it in his own mind with the long *quais* that run by the grey-green Seine. He was less interested in improving the inner side of London than in decorating her exterior, because although he acquired and used a stock of phrases about class coming closer to class, he was not genuinely interested in the problems of the working classes. He was like his mother, who dismissed the death of Charles Dickens with

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the observation that he had written much on behalf of the lower classes, who would surely enjoy better conditions some day. *Some day* was a very convenient date, which had not been quite good enough for Prince Albert, who had been responsible for the first model working-men's flats, complete with bathrooms, which had been erected at Kennington.

Perhaps it was for the sake of the bathrooms that the Prince of Wales agreed to open the Trades Union Exhibition in 1870 — a new gesture from the royal house and one not so successful as it might have been. For some of the Prince's public appearances in that year tended to nullify the good impression made by the others.

A Prince of Wales subpoenaed to the Divorce Court — that was a sensation Britain had not enjoyed since the matrimonial squabbles of George IV and Caroline of Brunswick! Happily it was not his own marriage which was under discussion, but that of Sir Charles Mordaunt, who named two of the Prince's intimates, Lord Cole and Sir Frederick Johnstone, as co-respondents and brought allegations against the Prince of Wales which required the latter's appearance in the witness-box. He came with dignity before his mother's Judges, and left the court with the same dignity and with his name cleared, for he had only been guilty of writing some innocuous letters to the lady, who was in any case proved to be insane. This was all very well, but some of the mud had stuck, and he was booed at the theatre and at Epsom. He bore his unpopularity with patience and had at least the support of his mother, who required no assistance from her subjects when it came to chastising her family. Remembering, perhaps, that she had been hissed in her own young day, she let him down fairly lightly, and did not invoke Papa's memory more often than was absolutely necessary.

A section of the public, however, was not disposed to make little of the matter. Advanced Radical opinion had for some time been openly directed against the monarchy, and men like Sir Charles Dilke asked what was the use of so expensive an institution represented by a middle-aged woman who refused to hold court at Buckingham Palace or to receive the potentates who visited her realm, and whose heir was a proved rake. There was a young Radical at Birmingham, one Joseph Chamberlain, who, with the fatal talent of his family for backing the wrong horse, even went so far as to say that Britain ought to be a Republic.

In the spring of 1871 the Princess of Wales gave birth to her sixth and last child, Prince Alexander, who lived only for a day. Her recovery was again long and difficult, and from that time dated the deafness which handicapped her in later life. She was still only twenty-seven years old, and the people, who had loved her from the first, resented the physical afflictions which she suffered at so young an age, and murmured that the Prince did not appreciate his wife. The guilt was off the gingerbread now, and the young couple who had seemed so full of promise in 1863 were only the rather tarnished society leaders of 1871. The Prince had indeed reached a crisis in his popularity.

At this moment, when all sorts of stories, false and true, new and old, were being circulated about him, he had a great piece of good fortune. He fell seriously ill and came near to death. This, which in Latin countries would only have removed him from notice and from memory, in Britain earned him immediate sympathy and popularity. A superstitious thrill went through the country when it became known that, at the very same season when his father had died ten years before, the Prince of Wales was stricken of the same disease and lay fighting with typhoid fever.

Fighting indeed it was, for the Prince was younger than his father had been and full of his mother's tenacious courage. Life was sweet to him, and he lay there at Sandringham gasping for life and grateful for his wife's ministrations. Alexandra did everything for him — she whispered to the onlookers that it was 'her only comfort' — and when she could leave the sickroom the young Princess, whose English life had not quite fulfilled the hopes she had formed in Denmark, ran out through the winter darkness to find other comfort in the chapel nearby.

There was another presence in the sickroom beside his wife's. Queen Victoria, full of terrible foreboding, had hurried across country to his bedside, and though business recalled her to Windsor during the course of his illness, she came again and again to Sandringham. Once he knew her, and said faintly, 'It's Mama!' and when she whispered 'Dear child!' he answered with his unflinching politeness, 'How kind of you to come'. But for the most part she sat behind a screen, listening to her son raving in all the languages which his tutors had taught him; looking into the lamp-lit room where the nurses moved about him and Alix knelt in prayer, with

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sufficiently bitter thoughts in her usually self-confident heart. Had she been loving enough to Bertie, and would he be taken from her before she could show her love? Would he follow his father to the mausoleum at Frogmore in another bleak December? It was the first time for a decade that she had thought of anything but Albert, or her own grief, as the fatal 14th came round. But on that very day her son began to mend, the strain lightening in a burst of cheerful bathos, with Mr. Alfred Austin solemnly writing —

‘Across the wires the electric message came:
He is no better, he is much the same,’

and Prince Alfred taking great credit to himself for suggesting the wholesome draught of pale ale which had refreshed his brother at the turn of his malady.

The whole nation shared the feelings of the Queen — relief, and a guilty sense of having been unjust to the Prince. When he appeared in London, pale and lame, on February 27th, 1872, and drove with his mother and his wife to a great Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul’s, there was no doubt about the enthusiasm or the loyalty of the multitude. Two days later another piece of good luck befell the monarchy, when a man threatened the Queen with a pistol. The assailant, who was afterwards found to be insane, was seized by no less a person than the intrepid Mr. John Brown, so that the triumphant Queen might well feel that her choice of an attendant was justified. The sentimental public roared fresh gratitude for a royal life spared, and thus, thanks to an infection caught during a party of pleasure and to the abortive act of a lunatic, a crisis of the Crown had passed.

The Prince’s illness did not mean, of course, that his popularity was never to diminish. His own robust manhood soon drove him back into the way of life which had scandalized his critics, and every now and then there was an outburst of more or less well-founded rumour about his doings, culminating in the Tranby Croft affair twenty years later. The scandal press was soon yapping at his heels again, and two years after the Thanksgiving Service the *World* published three leading articles stating that his debts amounted to £600,000. General Ponsonby, the Queen’s Secretary, was obliged to write to the *Daily Telegraph* and ask that this highly respectable newspaper should give the lie to the *World* — a print with which Her Majesty could have nothing to do. But the Prince of Wales himself read the

World and the *Tomahawk* and *Reynolds' Newspaper* and chuckled richly over his big cigar at their opinion of him.

Nor did the Queen adhere faithfully to the standard of conduct she had set herself in her sickroom vigils, thanks to the notorious difference between the devil sick and the devil well. Bertie restored to health had still power to exasperate her, and she was as ready as ever to refuse him the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland when it once again came under discussion in 1872. When the Prince wrote to her in October, 'I would like to discuss with Gladstone the subject of some useful employment which I could undertake as your eldest son and which I am as anxious as ever to obtain', she still felt that she could not permit him to have talks with Gladstone, whom she detested, behind her back. Many years were to pass before she admitted him, even half-heartedly, to her confidence — not until the bogey of Prussianism, quiescent since 1870, reappeared with the third German Emperor in 1888.

Alexandra, who had shown an almost supernatural piety and compassion during her husband's illness, became refreshingly human again as 1872 wore on. There was a dinner at Windsor on December 14th — a day which had now become one of thanksgiving as well as of grief — when she sat next to Dean Stanley and said, with a note of sly mockery under her conventional distress, that it was a pity Princess Alice was getting herself talked about, both in Hesse and in England, by her friendship with the philosopher Strauss, whom she had actually permitted to dedicate a book to her. The Dean, of course, explained that this was an intellectual friendship — the phrase 'platonic friendship' had not then been invented — but the thought hung in the air that the Princess of Wales was not sorry to criticize one of her husband's impeccable sisters, or to infer that he was not the only subject of gossip in the family.

Family gossip, family aspirations had naturally an immense attraction for the Prince of Wales. Gambetta was to say to him jokingly, 'I find it very natural that you should be a royalist', and indeed he was more royalist than the Queen. Victoria's self-sufficiency bore her high above the insignia of her office. To *be* Victoria by the Grace of God, to defend with vehemence the honour of her country, mattered more to her than to split hairs on the divine right of kings or survey the vicissitudes of monarchy in other lands. The Prince of Wales never felt quite so sure of himself, but he did feel sure of his

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trade of kingship. His adroitness as well as his interest in people led him to admit Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Chamberlain to his friendship, and like all republicans they were enchanted with the royal favour. But he could not take Radicals very seriously, at this stage of his career at least, and could not quite realize that the ministers of some countries had more to do with policy than their kings. The Coburg Trust had been so successful in Europe — had set its sons and daughters on or near half a dozen thrones, and the house of Sonderburg-Glucksburg was no less successful, with a king in Greece, a future empress in Russia, and a future queen in Britain, that he naturally saw government as a family affair. Hence his long-enduring belief in that outmoded diplomatic weapon in which his mother's faith was already shaken — the dynastic marriage.

There was some excuse for thinking that sovereigns had more to do with policies than their ministers in the case of Russia, where the Czar was an autocrat, and in consequence the Prince of Wales set himself to repair the damage done by Gortschakoff's declaration and the Conference of London by a personal *rapprochement* with the Czar. He was already connected by marriage with the Russian ruler through his sister-in-law, the Czarevna, but he desired to see an Anglo-Russian matrimonial alliance, not having agreed at all with the views his mother had expressed at the betrothal of the Princess Louise. He had, in fact, disapproved of her marriage with a commoner. Princes and Princesses should wed their equals, and his next brother, Prince Alfred, ought to contract an alliance which should be useful as well as happy.

There were two places on the Continent where the Prince of Wales might expect at this time to meet the members and connexions of his vast clan, and these were Fredensborg in Denmark and Jugendheim in Hesse. After the death of his sister Alice, Athens to a certain extent took the place of Jugendheim, and at the court of his brother-in-law he found freedom and the interest of Balkan politics; Fredensborg was never supplanted, for Christian IX lived to a great age. The Russian royalties often visited Jugendheim, for the Czarina had been born a princess of Hesse, and there a meeting was arranged between Prince Alfred and the Czar's only daughter, the Grand Duchess Marie. The young couple were so obliging as to declare their love for each other and with some misgivings on the part of Queen Victoria the marriage was arranged.

The Prince and Princess of Wales went to St. Petersburg for the magnificent wedding in January 1874, when the brilliant pageant of Holy Russia was spread for the second time before the Prince's eyes. The Winter Palace was glittering with gold and jewels and smelling most abominably in its darker passages — 'dead moujik' was what a facetious guest called the smell; there were hunting parties by day and balls at night, with the Grand Duchesses in their court dress of blue and white and a huddle of serfs gaping in the snow beyond the fires of the sentries. They went on to Moscow, where peasants and citizens offered more rich gifts to the bridal couple, and the solemn processions of the Orthodox Church filled the square where Lenin's body was to lie. The Prince of Wales came home laden with exotic memories of Russia: London was drab by comparison, and before very long he was fretting to be on his travels again. For the need of fresh scenes was now driving him on to a perpetual restlessness, and perhaps also the feeling that only when he was abroad, free from the shadow of Windsor, could he fully realize his own personality. Some obscure desire to compensate himself for the splendours of Russia made him turn his eyes eastward, to where, still farther inside the continent of Asia, his mother owned palaces and treasure-houses, stores of jewels and precious metals which far outshone the possessions of the Czar.

Since the Indian Mutiny the government of India had passed from the East India Company under the dominion of the Crown, and was managed by a Secretary of State and a Council, with a Viceroy representing the Queen. When she was proclaimed sovereign of India promises of religious toleration, equal justice and political amnesty had ensured the pacification of India, and the majority of the native princes were faithful to her. Under these circumstances the development of Indian trade and sources of wealth went on apace to the great comfort of British investors: the chief anxiety now was not the fear of mutiny, but the dread of Russian aggression on the North-West frontier. Three successive Viceroys, Lords Laurence, Mayo and Northbrook, had followed a policy of *laissez-faire* in Afghanistan from 1863 to 1875, when it was observed that Russian influence was growing dangerously strong in Turkestan and required a strong policy to offset it on the frontier. Matters were in this fluid state when the Prince of Wales expressed a desire to visit his mother's great Asiatic possessions.

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It was the Eastern counterpart of his earlier visit to Canada. His endless travels had led him north as far as Sweden, where by the Gulf of Bothnia the King had admitted him to the cult of Freemasonry, and south to drink sherbet with the Sublime Porte by the waters of the Bosphorus, but when he went across the Atlantic to Quebec and down the Red Sea to Bombay he bowed before neither King nor Sultan, but received the salutes of those who bowed before the representative of the greatest empire in the world. Such honours had been given to no British sovereign or prince except perhaps to his mother, for while he roamed the seven seas in her warships she sat in state at Windsor, receiving in her own drawing-room Sikh and Zulu, Red Indian, Maori, and head-hunting Dyak from Borneo, and taking their homage as a matter of course.

Victoria disapproved on principle of the voyage to India. Mr. Disraeli, whose dreams of Empire had inflamed her fancy, persuaded her that it could only do good, but the Queen was not so sure. There was the question of the Viceroy: the Prince claimed that he would supersede that functionary while he was in India, and Northbrook, afraid of losing caste before the natives, refused to be superseded, so that endless adjustments were necessary. Victoria bombarded her son with good advice. He was to be very careful about his diet — for he was now becoming increasingly addicted to the pleasures of the table — and he was to go to bed at ten o'clock every night. He was to be particularly careful about Sabbath Observance, so as to set the heathen a good Christian example. The Prince knew all about Sabbath Observance: he endured a 'jobation' on that subject every time he went to the Continent, and had recently pointed out with weary politeness that while he had never visited a music-hall or theatre on a Sunday, he held liberal views on Sunday travel when such was expedient. Expediency again! The Queen groaned, and redoubled her exhortations, so that the Prince was sick of his plan before he had embarked upon it and left England with a heavy heart. A few days in Paris, however, perceptibly lightened that organ.

From the moment when he arrived in Bombay on November 8th and found that the Mohammedans of that city had erected a triumphal arch with the simple legend, 'Tell Mama we're Happy', the tour was a complete success. It was a happy blend of gorgeous ceremony and Babu malapropisms exactly calculated to please and amuse the Prince, and although he was no longer the attractive

modest lad who had thrilled Canada but a stoutish gentleman of thirty-four with a few stains on his reputation, his personal charm had its accustomed effect and was felt by all who came in contact with him. There was a magnificent Durbar on the Maidan at Calcutta where he received the homage and tribute of the Princes in a ceremony which made those at the Winter Palace pale into insignificance and reminded the spectators of the glories of the Mogul Empire.

The Empire — it was a word to conjure with, and half-way across the world Mr. Disraeli was whispering it into the receptive ear of his royal mistress. He had brought off the deal in the Suez Canal shares, so that when the Prince of Wales sailed home from India the Union Jack would be flying where the flag of the Khedive had dipped to his outward passage, and he longed to commemorate this new command of the road to India by a magniloquent new title for his sovereign. The Queen hesitated, and was lost. If a still small voice told her that to be called Queen of Great Britain was to bear the proudest of all earthly titles, she remembered also that Vicky was to be an Empress, thanks to that upstart Bismarck: if the Germans could make an Empire, much more therefore could she. It did not occur to the autocrat to consult the son who should bear her titles after her, and so it befell that the Prince of Wales received the news of the Titles Bill, like any other subject, from the public prints.

Those in his Indian entourage perceived that he was deeply hurt by this lack of confidence. He wrote at once to England in terms of unmistakable displeasure, 'As the Queen's eldest son, I think I have some right to feel annoyed that the announcement of the addition to the Queen's title should have been read by me in the newspapers instead of [my] having received some intimation of the subject from the Prime Minister'. The power to dissemble, which he had been slowly acquiring, for the time deserted him, and surrounded by strange scenes and dark faces the Prince of Wales returned to the frank sensitive mood of his childhood at Windsor. He was hurt, and he showed it, but his mother, sweeping a smiling curtsy to her favourite Prime Minister as he proposed the health of the Queen-Empress, did not give a second thought to his discomfiture. Bertie was a long way away, and though he was vehement against taking the title of 'Imperial Highness' for himself, a few kind expressions of regret and a half-apology from Mr. Disraeli would soon soothe Bertie's affectionate heart when he came home.

CHAPTER II

PARIS, 1878

AFTER his return from India the Prince of Wales' visits to Paris became more frequent. The British Government had lost no time in recognizing the Third Republic, and it was impossible for the Prince to allow his affection for the exiled Bonapartes to come between him and a country which he loved and which was on terms of friendship with his own. Napoleon III had died early in 1873 and the hopes of the family were now centred on his young son, the Prince Imperial, but pending a Bonaparte restoration, it was expedient to be on good terms with the government *de facto*. Nor was this really difficult. The Prince of Wales found it possible to get on very well with the first President, M. Thiers, and his successor, Marshal MacMahon: he visited the former more than once under the incognito of the Earl of Chester, and in 1873 there was a chance meeting at Trouville, during one of the Prince's yachting excursions, which, being reported to Bismarck by his spies, threw the Chancellor into a frenzy of suspicion. He did not desire to see an Anglo-French understanding, for France was already far stronger than he had expected, having paid her huge war indemnity and got rid of the army of occupation in record time.

The third President of the Republic, M. Jules Grévy, and his President of the Council, M. Gambetta, were at first not so much to the Prince's liking. At the same time there was a change in the choice of Ambassadors to the Court of St. James, who had previously been the bearers of noble names, and the Prince, who had welcomed the representatives of the great families of de Broglie, de Decazes and de la Rochefoucauld, become by a turn of fate also the representatives of the Republic, was less enthusiastic about their unknown bourgeois successors. When he went to Auteuil for the races after the installation of M. Grévy he refused to share the President's box as he had done with Thiers and MacMahon and sat with his personal friends. An uncomfortable rumour began to spread that he had said the Princess of Wales could not know Madame Grévy, who had been in service.

The Prince of Wales, in effect, was something of a snob at this period when his love of amusing Frenchmen and Frenchwomen was perhaps greater than his love for France. His own friends, the aristocrats of three regimes, were still secure in their chateaux, though impoverished by the war: it was more agreeable to mock with them at the pedestrianism of the new order than woo its leaders with fair words. A beautiful young duchess was a more agreeable partner for a tête-à-tête than Madame Jules Grévy, and his old friend de Gallifet a more congenial companion than M. Gambetta who — the Prince noted with horror — was often shabby and untidy. But the day came when he was to see Gambetta in a new light, thanks to that ex-republican, Sir Charles Dilke, now admitted to his friendship. It was Dilke who brought them together and the Prince soon perceived that the fiery southerner with his insistence on '*La trouée de Vosges*' and his often-repeated phrase — '*Le Prussianisme — voilà l'ennemi!*' was a man who thought as he did and who also believed in a new Anglo-French *entente*. Presently he was able to include de Gallifet in this friendship, and the General, still smarting from his imprisonment, found that his countryman was more of a kindred spirit than he had imagined. This *rapprochement*, so useful to French politics, was typical of the Prince's tact and ability not only to win friends for himself but to win them for each other.

The year 1878, for him so full of incident both public and domestic, offered a remarkable chance for prosecuting his conversations with the leaders of the new Republic. It had been decided to hold an Exhibition: one of those vast universal expositions in which Prince Albert had set the fashion more than a quarter of a century before, and to which every country of consequence was now condemned at regular intervals. The Prince of Wales enjoyed Exhibitions with their bustle, their colour and their variety; his longing for work found some outlet in committee organization. He had been consulted about the great Exhibition at Vienna in 1873, but the Austrian capital was too far from London for very frequent visits, and at the state opening he had been ruffled at having to yield precedence to his brother-in-law, Fritz Wilhelm, now the heir of an Empire. In Paris he would not suffer any such annoyances, for in Paris there was no Franz Joseph to insist upon rigid etiquette, Paris could be visited at any time; Paris, in fact, was Paris.

'*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*' — the old saying might have

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been written of Paris, as the Prince of Wales was now finding out. St. Cloud and most of the Tuileries had gone up in the smoke and flame of the Commune, Compiègne and Fontainebleau were shorn of their glories, but though the palaces of his youth welcomed him no more, the boulevards of Paris, the hill of Montmartre and the narrow streets of the Left Bank were as he had always known them. '*Son Altesse aime la grande vie et elle adore le boulevard où elle peut flâner incognito*' — not always incognito, for the Parisians recognized the thickening body and heavy beard, the elegant attire and the big cigar of the Prince of Wales even when they officially belonged to Lord Chester or Lord Renfrew. Women were as beautiful, Paris was as beautiful, whether an Emperor sat at the Tuileries or a President at the Elysée, and an Exhibition year promised exceptional gaiety. It was no wonder that the Prince of Wales, newly arrived at the Hotel Bristol for a committee meeting on the first of March, wrote diplomatically home to his parent, 'I find I shall have a great deal to do with the Exhibition'. Committee meetings were the best excuse for frequent visits to Paris that he had had since the Franco-Prussian War.

They also kept him extremely busy in London, for he was President of the British section and a most efficient one, knowing all the exhibitors personally and entering into all details with so much interest that the British section was the only one to be practically complete when the Exhibition was opened, and was generally pronounced the most successful. On the third of May he rose to propose the health of the President of the Republic at the banquet given by the British exhibitors and attended by many distinguished Frenchmen, and for the first time he declared his *credo* in public when, speaking of the long enmity between France and Britain, he said, 'The jealousy which was the cause of the animosity has now, I feel sure, ceased for ever, and I am convinced that the *entente cordiale* which exists between this country and our own is one not likely to change'. There was a reciprocal interest, he went on to say, in the prosperity of France and Britain, for economic as well as political co-operation was his aim, as, far in advance of his time, he made point after point which was to be used by Thomas Barclay and the pioneers of the *entente* of 1904. Lord Lyons, the British Ambassador to Paris, was delighted with the effect of the speech, and Lord Salisbury, the recently appointed Foreign Secretary, had nothing

but praise for the Prince. It was a new atmosphere for the pupil of Albert and Stockmar.

In the elation of that radiant month of May in Paris no project of friendship seemed to him to be too extreme. He even identified himself with the proposal for a Channel tunnel until horrified British military experts had to intervene — the friendship with France might not last, or an enemy power might occupy the French coast, in which case invasion, not goodwill, would be served by the tunnel.

In the summer of the Exhibition his kinsman, the King of Hanover, died in Paris, leaving one son, the Duke of Cumberland, who was later to marry the Prince's younger sister-in-law, Thyra of Denmark. The old King had been broken in heart and health since he was exiled from his dominions by the rise of Prussia and the proclamation of the German Empire, and the Duke found himself a man with no inheritance. The Prince of Wales had the greatest sympathy with both of his kinsmen and seized the opportunity to walk through Paris in the funeral procession, making every possible display of respect. This was noted, as he had meant it to be, in Berlin, where an excitable young Prince of nineteen, by whose side he had knelt at the boy's first Communion four years previously, was beginning to entertain thoughts about his Uncle Bertie which were anything but sanctified.

The Paris Exhibition, however, did not provide the sole excitements of 1878. In the same summer a Congress met at Berlin to discuss the problems raised by the Russo-Turkish War of 1877. Britain, which had at first been against Turkey, thanks to Mr. Gladstone's great condemnation of the Bulgarian atrocities, became alarmed at the swift advance of the Russians towards Constantinople and the Dardanelles. The Government made, in the words of Lord Granville, 'numerous little demonstrations of "benevolent neutrality" which added little to Britain's dignity or strength and which had no practical result, except to irritate Russia', and after the belligerents had concluded the Treaty of San Stefano, which would have virtually ruined Austrian, as well as British, influence in the Near East, the other great Powers insisted on a Conference to settle the problems of the war in a manner more generally acceptable. This Congress opened at Berlin on June 13th, under the presidency of Prince Bismarck.

The Prince of Wales was deeply concerned about the choice of

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the British representative. Lord Salisbury, the Foreign Minister, seemed the natural choice, even the Queen, who admired Lord Beaconsfield and had good cause to know his ability, believing that the elder statesman, now in his seventy-third year, was not physically fit for the long journey or the strain of the Conference. But her son advocated the claims of Beaconsfield with passion. He had been disgusted at the Russian attitude — the complete negation of his tactics of diplomacy by marriage, and six months previously had written to his mother, 'We keep always offering advice which is rarely followed, and turned into ridicule into the bargain. Then again, if we make use of big words such as "British interests" at the present moment, unless we are ready to enforce them by force, we shall never be able to hold our head up again in the eyes of the world'. Tautological, platitudinous, these were nevertheless strong words, and strong words were what he wanted to hear at the Congress. Wherefore 'let me implore you', he said, 'to urge Lord Beaconsfield to go — as it is a matter of such vital importance to our country and dignity that we come out of the difficulty masters of the situation'.

His instinct was correct. Lord Beaconsfield emerged triumphant from a duel of wits with Bismarck, whose famous exclamation, '*Der alte Jude, das ist der Mann!*' shows that anti-Semitism had no very strong hold in the Germany of Wilhelm I. Bismarck was very much the master of Germany, for the aged Emperor leaned upon him with the more eagerness since two attempts were made on his own life in that same year of 1878 — attempts which left the Prince of Wales ruefully reflecting, underneath his polite expressions of thanksgiving, how much more convenient it would have been if the old man had died, and Fritz and Vicky, who detested the Chancellor, had come to power.

Meantime there was Lord Beaconsfield, who had brought back Peace with Honour, as he said, and who had certainly effected sweeping changes in the map of the Balkans. Independent sovereignty was conferred upon Montenegro, Servia and Rumania, which last country was ruled by a Hohenzollern Prince, Carl von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, and a new state of Bulgaria was created. Prince Alexander of Battenberg was elected King, but abdicated in 1886, his place being taken by a member of the Coburg Trust, which even at that late date in the nineteenth century was continuing to supply

candidates for vacant thrones. All these changes in the Balkans, admirable on paper, caused endless friction before the Balkan Wars broke out in the next generation, and Russia, deprived of her influence in the Near East, spread her tentacles towards Afghanistan, Tibet and Persia in a manner highly disturbing to the British. Germany and Austria drew closer together after the Congress, and while, generally speaking, the Treaty of Berlin was a settlement which kept Europe from a general war for thirty-six years, it was also a powder magazine which contained all the dynamite for the next explosion.

With these far distant consequences the Prince of Wales was naturally not concerned. He was far more exercised over an immediate cause of dispeace — the anger of France over a secret treaty which Britain had concluded with the Porte on June 4th and cheerfully revealed on July 9th. By this treaty Britain promised to guarantee the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan in the event of Russia retaining Batoum, Kars and Ardahan, in return for which Turkey would undertake reforms in Asia Minor and allow Britain to garrison and administer the Island of Cyprus.

The news of this treaty at once roused French chauvinism. The French had heard of guarantees and reforms before, such being the normal language of protocol, but the cession of Cyprus to the British seemed to strike a blow at their own power in the Mediterranean, of which they were jealous; and there was an abrupt end to the praises and flattery lavished on the British section at the Exhibition. Lord Lyons, afraid of hostile manifestations, advised the Prince of Wales to cancel a visit he was about to pay to Paris. The Prince refused to consider it. He was determined upon two things: that the country should hold this important complement to Malta and base on the road to India, and that she should hold it without rousing the effective anger of the French. Outbursts of anger, he was well aware, one must expect from that volatile nation, but he did not mean that the outbursts should end in mobilization.

Accordingly he invited M. Gambetta to lunch with him at the Café des Anglais, and, to give the meal a less formal character, took with him a young secretary from the Embassy, instead of Lord Lyons. It was a good illustration of the new technique of diplomacy — a prince meeting a statesman, neither in the ante-chambers of his own palace nor under the seal of night and secrecy, but in a public

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restaurant, although at the Café des Anglais the Prince of Wales usually occupied his own *cabinet particulier*, Le Grand Seize. That was the way the world was turning, towards the restaurant and the casino, and the Prince played his part like a successful business man, plying his guest with good food and then turning on him the full battery of his personality. Soon Gambetta was persuaded that the acquisition of Cyprus held no menace for the French. The phrase *entente cordiale* was heard more than once; Gambetta went away as enthusiastic in that cause as the Prince himself, nor did his enthusiasm wane until his death, which took place prematurely four years later.

Lord Lyons and Lord Salisbury were exultant, and the Foreign Minister thanked the Prince sincerely for the persuasive tact which had averted a not inconsiderable danger. It was a private diplomatic triumph, to add to his public triumphs at the Exhibition, and it was an immense satisfaction to have promoted the cause of the *entente*. The good effect did not soon wear off in Paris, for when Queen Victoria received the President on her way through Paris to Italy in the following spring, she found him full of it. That M. Grévy should describe France as *la soeur de l'Angleterre* was perhaps inevitable, but there was more sincerity and more truth in his succinct description of the Prince as *un Parisien*. She knew it to be true: Bertie was sometimes *plus Parisien que les Parisiens*, and it was not quite the phrase to win his mother's heart. Some one else remarked that he loved France '*gaiment et sérieusement*'; it was a lucid definition. For his was a serious affection, the love that ends in formal marriage settlements or contracts of alliance, shot through with a gaiety that was entirely Gallic and had never been experienced by the ponderous Guelphs or indeed by any English monarch since his remote collateral ancestor; the second Charles.

He was in high spirits in the autumn of 1878 after his various Parisian successes, and particularly attentive to his wife, so that Alexandra was able to thank Queen Victoria for the latter's modest birthday gifts on December 1st (a photograph of the Wales children and a little brooch whereof Majesty had picked up the stone with its own fair hands) with the proud announcement that 'We spent a very happy though quiet day, and my Bertie quite overloaded me with presents'.

But the year was not destined to end on a happy note. Diphtheria was ravaging the Grand-ducal family of Hesse and Princess Alice,

despairingly nursing her dying children, had herself contracted the disease. As December wore on to that memorable day which had seen the Consort's death in 1861 and his son's return from death ten years later, the telegrams from Darmstadt became more alarming. The Prince of Wales was at Windsor, and late on the evening of the 13th he was forced to make many excuses to his mother for appearing before her in a 'sort of smoking jacket' to hear the last message which told of the Princess in life. The next morning — the fatal 14th — brought the news of her death, and as the bereaved Queen threw herself into the arms of her eldest son he said huskily, 'It is the good who are always taken'.

He was indeed deeply touched by this first gap in the circle of his brothers and sisters. With the slight estrangement from Vicky he had drawn closer to Alice's loving nature, and he regarded her as being to some extent the enemy of Prussianism, from which she had suffered much in Hesse. He was thirty-seven years old now, and looked older: he was beginning to realize, though he was never to approve, what his mother had felt when she sustained her first bereavements, in the days of his impatient boyhood.

'Whom the gods love, die young': his classical scholarship had left him with that tag, and he was to see it fulfilled again before six months were out.

In spite of his increasing friendships inside the Third Republic, he had never faltered in his attentions to the French royal exiles in Britain. There were three sets of them now: there was a little joke about that on the boulevards, where they said that the Bourbons were the *monde*, the Bonapartes the *demi-monde*, and the Orleans the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. It was with the '*Revue*' that the Prince was most intimate, and had been since the days when he played with Paris and Chartres after the Revolution of 1848, and he was on excellent terms with the Dukes their uncles, and with Princess Clementine who had married a Coburg and would see her son Ferdinand on the Bulgarian throne. The Bourbon claimant was seldom in England: he was called the Comte de Chambord now, and was more often in Vienna and Rome, but the Bonapartes were not very far away at Chislehurst, and there was something in the young Prince Imperial which reminded the Prince of Wales of himself in earlier days.

What was it Louis had said to his mother? '*Je ne peux rien faire pour*

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mon propre pays.' That was what Albert Edward might have said in the first baffled years of trying to find employment, until he had consoled himself with travel, pleasure and Exhibitions. But 'Loulou', being a Bonaparte, had no flair for Exhibitions: war was his trade, and he finally won the permission of his mother and Victoria to go out to the Cape, where the soldiers of the Queen were waging one of her wars of Empire — this time against the Zulus. The Duke of Cambridge, a Commander-in-Chief of more than usual senility and incompetence, suggested 'his going out on his own hook' with special recommendations to Sir Bartle Frere. The phrase was well chosen. The Prince was on his own hook with a vengeance, being left to his death at the hands of a band of Zulus by the misfortunes of a broken saddle girth, a runaway horse, and what Queen Victoria did not hesitate to call 'the cowardly desertion of a British officer'.

The Prince of Wales was greatly distressed by the young man's death, and humiliated by its manner. He could not do enough for the bereaved Empress, remembering the days when her youthful beauty had dazzled his eyes in the Paris of the Second Empire. He brushed aside all suggestions that the French Government might resent an elaborate ceremonial at the burial of the Bonaparte pretender, for his unfailing instinct told him that whatever they might say in public the French would secretly be flattered at honours paid to the name of Bonaparte. 'He was our guest and the son of our greatest ally,' he reminded his mother, and rejoiced to find her in agreement with him. That the Prince of Wales should bear the pall at the funeral of the Prince Imperial was a minor tribute: he insisted that a salvo of minute guns, one for each of the Prince's twenty-three years, should be fired off Spithead when the vessel bearing his coffin was signalled. So it befell that listeners on the French coast, whence the first Napoleon had hoped to invade England, heard the solemn boom! coming across the water as the Emperor's grand-nephew received England's homage to the dead.

Thus the Prince's breadth of feeling had touched Republicans and Bonapartists in the course of a single year, but when all was over — the Exhibition fireworks, the champagne of the Café des Anglais, and the guns of Spithead, the last word, as always, was with the Queen. She had continued to view the new *entente* with a reflective, not to say a jaundiced eye. The Duke of Wellington, she recalled, had often growled something sensible about the French — 'Plenty

of friendship but no love' — and she still thought it was true. But when in November 1879 she heard the first rumours of the Dual Alliance between Germany and Austria, her reaction was to hope that it would not be directed against France. 'The value of such an alliance', she wrote, 'would be greatly *diminished* in my eyes and I am certain in that of this country, if it were misconceived and were supposed to be of such a character as would give umbrage to France.'

That was the language of moderation and of loyalty: there was nothing moderate but all that was true in her summing up of the Zulu War which had deprived Eugénie of her son, cost the lives of many British soldiers, and was now worrying Lord Beaconsfield by the need to impose new taxation to pay for it.

'One great lesson,' wrote the indefatigable pen, underlining more recklessly than ever, 'one great lesson is again taught us, but it is never followed: NEVER *let the Army and Navy DOWN so low as to be obliged to go to great expense in a hurry. . . .* If *we are* to maintain our position as a *first-rate* Power — and of that *no one* (but people of the Bright, or rather *Anderson, Jenkins, etc., school*) can doubt — we must with our Indian Empire and large colonies be *prepared for attacks and wars somewhere or other* CONTINUALLY. And the *true economy* will be to be *always ready*.'

CHAPTER III

SANDRINGHAM, 1882

THE Queen's private belief that the *entente* with France was not durable proved to be correct. Within four years of the Prince's triumphs of 1878 a new cause of controversy, far more serious than the Island of Cyprus, had come between the neighbours. This was Egypt, which had been for some years under the Dual Control of France and Britain.

The authority, such as it was, of the Khedive was menaced by the nationalist rebellion of Arabi Pasha, and it became necessary for the powers of the Dual Control to take action to prevent anarchy in Egypt. Unfortunately Gambetta, the days of whose life were already numbered, had fallen from power early in 1882 and his successor, M. de Freycinet, was neither so pro-British nor so daring as himself. De Freycinet was very unwilling to move against Arabi but finally ordered a French squadron to sail for Alexandria where its appearance along with a British detachment under Admiral Seymour might be sufficient to quell the disorder. Arabi, however, was not the man to be cowed by a mere show of force, and the disturbances in Alexandria became more and more alarming until, in the month of July, Admiral Seymour decided to send the rebels an ultimatum. Upon this the French, preferring discretion to valour, weighed anchor and hastened from the waters where their ancestors had fought bravely at the Battle of the Nile, leaving the British to bombard the port and finally to restore law and order. Arabi was defeated and the tottering power of the Khedive was restored, although rumours of a religious revolt in the Sudan hinted that peace might be of short duration. The British were thenceforth prepared to cope singlehanded with any new outbreak and also to keep for themselves any metaphorical corn and oil which might come out of Egypt: they regarded the Dual Control as at an end. From the moment when France refused to face up to her responsibilities in the Bay of Alexandria the system of partnership in Egypt had indeed ended, and with it, for the time being, the Prince of Wales' hopes of an *entente cordiale*.

Fortunately he was now occupied at home in a more serious manner than had hitherto been possible. His labours on so many committees had not been in vain: they had persuaded the Queen's Ministers that her frivolous heir had purpose and application, and his work in France during Gambetta's ministry had proved that he had a flair for diplomacy as well. Even his mother was beginning to think better of him and by the time he was forty had gone so far as to admit, in the privacy of her journal, that he was always a very good son to her. Time had removed some of the causes of friction which he used to find at Windsor, where in earlier days he had chafed at the influence of his sisters and the political opinions they expressed so freely in the Queen's absence. Princess Helena and Princess Louise, who had remained unmarried for several years after the Consort's death, had been the worst sinners in that respect; without the brains of the Princess Royal, they had been in a position to carry all sorts of messages from Mama in the solitude of her bereavement to the members of her Cabinet and were full of self-importance and misinformation as they quoted Lord B. and Mr. G. and the other statesmen to whom the Queen took care that Bertie should carry no messages. Now these helpful young ladies were married: Princess Helena and Prince Christian were preoccupied with their nursery and Princess Louise and Lord Lorne with the affairs of Canada, of which the latter had been appointed Governor-General. The only adverse influence was that of Prince Leopold, who, being an invalid, had never left home, and who had some of the confirmed invalid's strong prejudices and propensity for mischief. The Prince of Wales thought so at all events: he blamed his youngest brother for inflaming the Queen's strong dislike of Gladstone, for, he said, he 'delights in persuading Her he is Her enemy'. The Prince himself took no little pleasure in a trial of strength with the unseen forces of Windsor during the cabinet crisis of 1880 when he succeeded in persuading Lord Granville and Lord Hartington not to form a Government, so that Mr. Gladstone might again be Prime Minister. A Prince of Wales who could sway the decisions of statesmen was indeed a force to be reckoned with.

It was in this Gladstone Ministry of 1880 that Mr. Joseph Chamberlain became President of the Board of Trade, and Sir Charles Dilke Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. His friendship with the latter was as useful as it was pleasant until 1885 when Dilke went

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through the Divorce Court, which in Victorian England meant a fall from power as well as a fall from grace. By that time the Prince had a new friend whom, as in the case of Dilke and Gambetta, he had begun by disliking, but with whom, since about 1883, he had been on intimate terms. Lord Randolph Churchill was exactly the man to play the same rôle to the Prince of Wales as Disraeli had played to the Queen: his Conservatism, loyal to Crown and Empire, was flavoured with the original and attractive theories of Tory Democracy, and his audacity suggested that he would give his future King a more modern statesmanship than the cautious advisers of the Queen. He was an aristocrat, a cadet of the great house of Marlborough, which pleased the Prince; but he was also the representative of a new movement in English society, for he had married a charming lady from America, and they had a vivacious small boy called Winston.

The American heiresses had invaded Britain at last, and many a tarnished coronet was regilded by the dollars from Pittsburg or St. Louis, while the inner circle of the Bedchamber Women gathered round their sovereign at Windsor and stared in horror at the downfall of society. Not that the solid phalanx at the heart of Victorian society was as yet touched by Americanism, though here an impoverished Marquis or there a younger brother allowed prudence to go hand in hand with love, but one American Countess brought over two younger sisters, two younger sisters invited four dearest friends, and so on until by arithmetical progression the ballrooms of Mayfair seemed to be full of unconventional young ladies with delectable figures, brittle complexions and transatlantic accents. The Prince of Wales was delighted. It had never been possible for him to revisit America, and here was America come to him: New York *tempo* quickening the slower rhythm of London, with its readier laughter and its sharper wit. Windsor and the circles which took their tone from Windsor might shudder, but the 'Marlborough House Set' was extended to include the bright citizens of the New World, as well as some of the sombre inhabitants of the Old.

For the Prince of Wales was beginning to find friends among a race which had sometimes been useful to English monarchs but seldom treated as more than serfs. He had met rich Jews in his travels abroad, the Rothschilds and the Hirschs who had put away the earlock and the caftan and come out of the ghetto on the golden wings of wealth.

Sometimes they had lent him money and sometimes they had merely talked to him, but with such rich oriental imagery, such artistic invention as charmed a man who would always prefer to be told a story than to read a book. Now their co-religionists were creeping into England, some drawn by the fact that a Jew had there become an honoured Prime Minister, some impelled by the ruin of their fortunes in the Franco-Prussian War, and flying before the field-grey armies sweeping on to Paris. Bayswater and Holland Park were oases for the children of Israel, and Marlborough House became their new Jerusalem.

The Queen, who had been delighted when her husband surrounded himself with Germans, was disgusted when her son made friends with Americans and Jews. It is true that the Consort's Germans wore beards and spectacles, while the Prince's Americans wore bustles and chignons, and it is doubtful if he discussed philosophy with them; moreover there was, there always had been, so much more publicity and talk about Bertie's fashionable doings than about Albert's serious ones. The pretty Americans, of course, added fuel to the fire, for publicity was what they had crossed the Atlantic to find, and Miss Anderson, Miss Fortescue, Miss Winslow and Miss Chamberlain raised a flurry of talk as each in turn touched the sceptre of Ahasuerus. The Princess of Wales saw them come and go: she lost her head and her temper a little over Miss Chamberlain, playfully named the Vice Chamberlain, but that was chiefly because the Prince took her abroad with him. English ladies had more decorum; there was Mrs. Wheeler, for example, who refused even to take a drive in public with her friend and Prince, and there was Lady Warwick, who emphasized that hers was a platonic friendship by explaining as often as possible how she had been converted to socialism — which made the Prince yawn most mightily. But if it came to a serious rivalry between the American ladies and the British there was one factor, or one person, which tipped the scales in favour of the home country, and that was the lovely lady who now dawned upon London and who was called Mrs. Langtry.

The Prince of Wales and the Jersey Lily! The two names bridge the long gap between the days when Victoria and Albert were the youthful lovers of Windsor and Edward and Alexandra the mature rulers of Buckingham Palace. They stand for the eighteen-eighties — for the days when Britain was undisputed mistress of the world,

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American wealth unorganized and German industry just beginning to make its vast weight felt. France was still scrambling for colonies, Italy scarcely worth taking seriously, Brazil and China still empires, and the Archduke Rudolf just married to Stephanie of Belgium with no thought of the shooting-box at Mayerling where his path towards the Imperial Crown would end. The Crown Princess of Prussia, her husband in perfect health, was promising herself to discipline her son severely when she should be Empress. Britain, mightier with each year, moved on towards a fifty years' Jubilee, and in a London where life became steadily gayer and more luxurious for the well-born and the adventurous, the Prince of Wales and the Jersey Lily had their brilliant hours.

Mrs. Langtry, just as much as the American heiresses and the Jewish bankers, was a portent. She was by way of being on the stage, and since the doors of many Mayfair homes were opened to the friend of the Prince of Wales, she played her part in a movement now beginning, and supported by the Prince himself — the recognition of the Theatre by Society. Which is to say that actors and actresses were lifted out of the rogue-and-vagabond, strolling-player class into realms where they could be both received and visited, and the impeccable married lives of certain theatrical celebrities proved that the mummers were often more respectable than the aristocrats who condescended to them. Since 1870 a great deal had been done to improve the condition of the theatres. Though the music-halls still, and for many years after, contained promenades where the haggling of prostitutes with their clients was a dismal *obbligato* to the orchestra, the theatres proper had been cleansed, literally and metaphorically, by that legislation which had also swept away the gin-palaces, the Shades and the gambling hells which were too often their adjuncts or their neighbours. The lights were going out at Cremorne and Ranelagh, as they had already expired at Vauxhall, and the wild company which had careered from Drury Lane to Rosherville became transformed, like the Gadarene swine in reverse action, into respectable citizens in tailcoats and basque bodices, presenting Scenes from Shakespeare in West-End drawing-rooms.

The Prince of Wales loved a good play. As a small boy he had enjoyed his visits to Astley's Circus and his visits to Italian opera at Covent Garden, though to a less extent, for he quickly detected the educational pill in the operatic jam. His taste was still for something

robust, whether in acting or in music, and though he enjoyed the Gilbert and Sullivan operas when they began to appear in the 'seventies, it is certain that he preferred the later repertoire of Madame Yvette Guilbert, the more *risqué* numbers of which, as the singer has testified, he knew as well as she did herself. But that was for his Paris life: at home he enjoyed melodrama, particularly *The Bells* — the theme of which considerably startled his Mama when, after some persuasion, she consented to come and see Henry Irving play Mathias at a command performance at Sandringham. He saw a good deal of Irving and Ellen Terry, J. L. Toole and William Terriss, and found some of the distraction which he constantly sought in the society of those whose lives were so different from his own.

He liked a play with a fast-moving story, but could never settle to read a book, any inclination he may ever have had for reading having been completely stifled by his years in the forcing-house of education. His correspondence reveals him as being always on the point of reading a book — he thanks So-and-so for a volume of memoirs, and is just going to read it, or mentions that he has got Such-an-one's novel, and hopes to read it soon, but he is less often seen triumphant at the final page. When he did get through a book, it was usually pronounced 'not satisfactory'. Thus *The Christian* was (perhaps not surprisingly) 'not satisfactory', though he was most gracious as King to Mr. Hall Caine when he met him on the Isle of Man. The Prince's literary taste had deteriorated since the days when he championed *Adam Bede* (very satisfactory), and like his mother, the admirer of *East Lynne*, he had a fancy for the second-rate lady novelists; for he sampled the excitements of Marie Corelli and Rhoda Broughton, solved *Lady Audley's Secret* with Miss Braddon and bent his latitudinarian eye on the spiritual struggles of *Robert Elsmere* and *Helbeck of Bannisdale*.

Books were for the smoking-room at Sandringham on a wet Sunday afternoon, and there were more interesting ways of passing the days. Yachting was one, and he began seriously as a yachtsman about this time, when he also registered his racing colours and set up a stable. There was swift excitement in both of these sports, and while he could only participate in one of them he could make a book in both. One could bet on the result of a race whether it were won by spread of canvas or speed of hoof. That was for the day-time: by night there was the green table and cigar-smoke curling up to the

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shaded lamp, while the click of counters and the fall of cards gave him new mental stimulus. He still played whist, as in the old days with Bishop Wilberforce, but very often he preferred baccarat.

These were some of the diversions of the Prince of Wales, and in them he was enthusiastically followed by the social climbers of the upper-middle class, so that presently there arose in England a type of hard-mouthed man of the world who believed that because he lost money on the City and Suburban, won it back at Doncaster, condescended to a Jewish broker who could have sold him up twice over, and kept an Alhambra girl in a villa in St. John's Wood that he was living the same sort of life as 'Teddy' and was as good as 'Teddy' any day. Such men as these failed to realize that while there was no reverse to their own counterfeit money, there was another side to the Prince of Wales — the side that only a few men saw and those only occasionally: Salisbury, Dilke, Gambetta and de Gallifet knew that under the genial, sophisticated surface there was a man of penetrating ability.

Nor did the Prince, in his passion for entertainment, neglect his home. The trouble was that he insisted on being entertained there too, for as time went on he grew less and less able to endure solitude and required amusing and if possible fresh company throughout his waking hours. Hostesses who entertained him for a shooting or racing party racked their brains to provide suitable company for him, and from nine o'clock in the morning would be hunting up relays of guests to talk to the Prince of Wales and keep him amused. That was the difficulty: the Prince would not concentrate unless genuinely interested in what was said to him, and though his politeness kept him from snubbing his interlocutors, he soon flung out signals of distress with which his intimates were familiar. When he began to fiddle with the bracelet he always wore, it was time to remove with all speed the person who had bored him. Conversely, he made no particular effort to be amusing himself, being sometimes rather silent in general company though his mother said he talked too much, and having a stock of little complacent ejaculations for all occasions — 'Yes, yes, yes!' he would say, when there was a gap in the talk, or 'Poor man, poor man!' in pitying tones when any one committed a gaffe in his presence. Any member of the lower orders, that is, for he expected the utmost correctness from the aristocracy, and if a guest presumed on the less conventional atmosphere of Sandring-

ham to treat his host with familiarity he encountered a freezing blue stare and a pouting lip rather reminiscent of a terrible old lady at Windsor.

Sandringham was unconventional, but only by contrast with the palaces of the Queen, and if her sensation-loving subjects licked their lips at the thought of 'nameless orgies' taking place in the unlikely surroundings of the Fen country, they would have found the revels of their Prince to be of a very mild nature. He had too high a sense of what was due to his wife's dignity and his own to import the manners and customs of Montmartre into Norfolk, where hide-and-seek, sliding downstairs on tea-trays and dancing to the tune of a barrel-organ, whereof the handle was turned by the master of the house, were some of the very antiseptic recreations. Then there were walks round the estate, of which the Prince was very proud and which he was constantly improving — for he was a model landlord and enjoyed the gratitude of his English cottagers as his mother enjoyed that of her Deeside protégés. The Queen thought he spent too much money on Sandringham: she did not like the place, and on her visits there was one certain cause of displeasure: Sandringham clocks were thirty minutes in advance of Greenwich. The Queen, who fortunately for herself did not live to see the introduction of Daylight Saving, detested this curious foible of the Prince; she said it was *a lie*.

The children of the Prince and Princess of Wales spent a great deal of their youth at Sandringham, and as they grew older their father began to cultivate them in the hopes of finding new amusement in his own family. He had always been a most affectionate parent, ready to shorten a business engagement to be punctual in taking his children to the circus, and a constant purveyor of dolls and toys. For he was still reacting violently against the methods of his own father, and his chief aim was that his own boys and girls should have a happy youth. When they were quite small he told a guest that 'he thought it very happy not to have to be always *at them*', and added wistfully, '*We* were perhaps a little too much spoken to and at, at least we thought we could never do anything right, anyhow'.

The children were happy, but they were not particularly interesting. By some fatality they had all missed their father's charm and their mother's beauty, and the elder boy and his three sisters presented an odd conglomeration of the less attractive physical points

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of their various relatives. Prince Albert Victor was the apple of his mother's eye, and from her he had inherited at least an interest in dress, acquiring in early manhood so remarkable a stock of haberdashery as to earn the nickname of 'Prince Collars and Cuffs'. He was a delicate boy and not a clever one: his brother Prince George was more promising. He was a sturdy lad with a merry face, very like his Aunt Dagmar.

The three little princesses were left to their governesses and their accomplishments, but for the two princes their father had a definite educational plan, which he put into action without drawing up a programme or drafting a single memorandum. They were confided to a tutor, the Reverend J. N. Dalton, and under his supervision were educated aboard the *Britannia* training-ship, thus having from the start what their father had never enjoyed, the society of other boys and the experience of practical matters as well as formal book-learning. Naturally the Prince had to put up with some spirited interference from his mother, who took a passionate interest in her grandchildren and was rather jealous of their Danish relatives. When their parents proposed to leave them in Copenhagen during their long tour in the Near East she refused her consent, saying, 'They are the children of the country and I shall be blamed for allowing any *risk* to be run'. The Prince, however, invoked medical opinion and the children were allowed to go. Later on it was the Cabinet who were anxious, when in May 1879 the boys went to sea for six months in the *Bacchante*. On that occasion the Queen crisply said that she approved the plan, 'which ought never to have been brought before the Cabinet', but when there was a subsequent proposal, supported by their father, to let them see active service at the Cape with the Naval Brigade, then coping with the first Boer rising, she vetoed it at once. It was unconstitutional, for the Boers were her subjects (or so she said) and the Princes must not take part in what was thus a civil war; and what was worse, it was dangerous. 'I am sorry Bertie should have been sore about the boys,' she wrote to their mother, but she was not, she never had been, really sorry to override his wishes.

When Sandringham and the children palled, there was Marlborough House and adult companionship. The Prince enjoyed the society of some of his own family, preferring his cousins to his brothers or brothers-in-law, and sometimes going about *en garçon*

with Count Gleichen, the title taken by his cousin Prince Victor of Hohenlohe, or with Prince George of Cambridge. Sometimes, too, he frequented that fading dandy, his uncle the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and whereas his father, forty years earlier, had condemned his brother to perish in immorality, the Prince of Wales, less censorious, only permitted himself one criticism — that Uncle Ernest always had impossible women. The old Duke and Count Gleichen were continental companions, and he saw them on state occasions as well as unofficially. More and more often these occasions were at Berlin, where there always seemed to be some reason for thanksgiving or jubilation. In 1878 it was the magnificent double wedding when Prince Arthur married Princess Louise of Prussia, the daughter of the Red Prince, in spite of Queen Victoria's earlier scruples about another Prussian marriage, and when Vicky's eldest daughter Charlotte married Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Meiningen. A year later the first-born of that marriage made the Prince of Wales a great-uncle at thirty-seven and the Queen a great-grandmother at the age of sixty.

As befitted a great-uncle, his life had begun to take a more serious turn. In London he had associated himself with the Social Reform movement of which the purification of the theatres and licensed houses had been a part. Stirring things were happening in the dependencies of the island kingdom: for in the East there had been trouble in Afghanistan, only quelled by Roberts's epic march from Kabul to Kandahar, and nearby in the West there was trouble which no forced marches could subdue. A new chief had arisen in Ireland, and Charles Stewart Parnell and the Land League were making difficult the path of Mr. Gladstone towards Home Rule on his own terms. Parnell had been clapped into Kilmainham gaol in October 1881 and 'Captain Moonlight' had taken his place throughout the winter, so that death stalked the land until the Captain had his grand success of the Phoenix Park murders in May 1882.

But these were matters for the sovereign and her Ministers, not for the Prince of Wales, who had to content himself with mild rejoicing that his mother's infant subjects were now compelled to receive an elementary education. He did not really care for such domestic developments, which he often and hastily dismissed as 'parish pump politics', but *faute de mieux* he applied himself to them, and the result was a personal attempt to reform legislation.

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His first effort was staged in the House of Lords, where he had a right to sit and where in 1879 he supported a Bill to permit marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister. It was a curious departure for a Prince of Wales and only gave fresh grist to the mill of the gossips who were able to say that this showed the Prince to have no respect for decency or established order. The bishops, taking their stand on the Prayer-book and the prohibited degrees, opposed the Bill, which was defeated in spite of the fact that the Prince presented a petition signed by several thousand Norfolk farmers, all eager to oblige their great neighbour at Sandringham. There is something appealing in the picture of the rural population of Norfolk clamouring together for a reform in the marriage laws on which all the rest of England was silent, but the Government was not impressed. The Queen hardly knew what to think: she disapproved of the remarriage of a bereaved spouse, but at the same time when her heir took the trouble to support a Bill about it, that Bill might as well become law. 'Lord B.', she noted, 'is in favour of it, but the whole Cabinet against it! Incredible!'

In 1885 the Prince supported the second Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, but this time without the aid of signatures from Norfolk. He enlisted the help of the London cabmen, with whom he was extremely popular, as any man might be who invariably gave half-a-sovereign in payment for the shortest drive. But the cabbies were no more successful than the rustics: their petition, too, glanced off the bulwark of the bishops, and it was not until six years after his accession that the champion of widowers enamoured of their sisters-in-law had the pleasure of giving the royal assent to an Act of Parliament in their favour.

In 1881 the Prince of Wales became a Trustee of the British Museum and was impelled to start an agitation for the opening of the building on Sunday afternoons. Once again the Queen was in a dilemma, for her views on Sabbath Observance were well known, and it was obviously but a short step from staring at the Elgin marbles in the cool shades of Bloomsbury to dancing the Carmagnole in Hyde Park. But, anxious not to nip Bertie's industry in the bud, she was able to evolve a formula: the opening of the Museum would keep the masses from drink, this was worthy of approbation, therefore the opening of the Museum was to be encouraged. A logician might have seen a flaw in the syllogism but the Queen saw

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none: she was certain that the State museums were more interesting than public-houses to the denizens of the East End. But the Government refused to make the experiment. The Prince of Wales had failed again and had to console himself with having opened on August 3rd, 1881, the first meeting of the International Congress of Medicine.

CHAPTER IV

LONDON, 1884

To this Congress came some of the greatest doctors of the age, and the Prince of Wales met and talked with Darwin, Huxley and Virchow. He had much more real interest in scientific development than his mother, for whom the whole of science was a closed book, and he was particularly intrigued by the germ theory of Koch and Pasteur. Nor did his interest wane when the conference was over: he proved that it was lasting by a visit, seven years later, to the Pasteur Institute, where he caused the whole germ theory to be explained and demonstrated to him. After that he founded the National Association for the Prevention of Consumption, rightly regarding tuberculosis, one of the scourges of his native land, as one of the great enemies which modern British medicine must seek to conquer. His axiomatic comment on consumption, 'If preventible, why not prevented?' had a ring of his mother's common sense, and was the motto which encouraged him in his later efforts — the presidency of the second National Tuberculosis Congress and the equipment of the Midhurst Sanatorium.

His work for medicine also took the characteristic form of organizing an International Health Exhibition, later on in the 'eighties, after he had had a great success with the International Fisheries Exhibition in 1883. This spectacle caught the national fancy, always benevolently if erratically disposed towards the fishermen, and the organization, directed by the Prince who was now expert in Exhibition management, was so good that a profit of £15,000 was obtained. The Health Exhibition was less lucrative, and the third display arranged by the Prince at this time — Music and Inventions — was the nearest thing to a failure that he ever touched. Perhaps it was not so easy to exhibit music; but the Prince, nothing daunted, continued his patronage of the art, and in due course founded the Royal College of Music in London.

In 1886 he took a leading part in organizing the Colonial and Indian Exhibition which was held at South Kensington, and read an address of welcome to the Queen when she came to open it in May.

It was the year before the Jubilee, and the Exhibition touched the popular fancy, already beginning to thrill to the Jubilee idea — the expansion of Britain's wealth and greatness during the fifty years' reign of a woman ruler. South Kensington was crowded with Britons, eager to see what their conquests had won; and native potentates were a constant source of interest. The Prince of Wales had to cope with them all: visiting rajahs, visiting princes, all came under the burning-glass of his courtesy. When King Kala Kua of the Sandwich Islands visited the Victoria and Albert Museum the Prince scandalized Vicky and her husband by yielding precedence to him. It was one thing to defer to the future German Emperor, and another to defer to King Kala Kua! The Prince's explanation, a masterpiece of terseness, revealed his theories of monarchy. 'Either the brute is a king', he said simply, 'or else he is an ordinary black nigger — and if he is not a king, why is he here at all?'

In 1884 he joined the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes and urged the inclusion of Miss Octavia Hill among the members. The time was not yet ripe, however, for the testimony of a woman, however capable, to be given in Commission, and the question of housing, so essentially a feminine interest, was debated, at the length normal to such gatherings, by a body of solemn gentlemen. The Prince's interest flagged after a time, though he attended the meetings of the Commission with regularity, and an observer noticed that he fiddled constantly with his notepaper and pencils — for he had three pencils, a blue and a red as well as the black, and as Tommy Traddles drew skeletons on his school books to cheer himself up, so the Prince of Wales consoled himself by drawing the Union Jack. Jacks half-mast, Jacks at the masthead, Red Ensigns and White, the heir of Empire drew them all.

These labours of organization and philanthropy required to be offset by divers forms of recreation and one at least of the Prince's amusements had the merit of being original. He was a connoisseur of fires, and had been ever since Marlborough House caught fire in 1865. On that occasion he had helped the fire brigade with more zeal than discretion, for while helping to rip up the nursery floor he contrived to fall through the rafters and might have been severely injured. After that he was content to be a spectator, and as an anonymous bystander he attended most of the big London

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blazes, having an arrangement with the authorities to let him know at once of any outbreak. He kept a room over a builder's premises in Watling Street where he could change out of the garments of a man of fashion into those more suited to anonymity, and when the excitement was over he and the few intimates who had accompanied him to the scene of action restored themselves with a tripe supper. Conservative in his patronage of all purveyors who pleased him, he ordered his tripe for many years from a butcher in the Tottenham Court Road.

This form of recreation, with its obvious compensation for the independent excitements and adventure he had missed in his youth, was naturally unknown to the general public, who would have found it hard to picture the Prince enjoying a dish of tripe in preference to ortolans or plovers' eggs. But he was *gourmet* as well as *gourmand*, like his friend Mr. Harry Chaplin, who relished the cottager's meal of beans and bacon as a change from French cooking. They were noble trenchermen, and at a time when new delicacies — the tomato, the banana, the pineapple — were beginning to appear on less exalted British tables, they indulged themselves in these and all the luxuries of food and drink which the world could produce. It was far otherwise at Windsor, where the Queen had a cup of tea and a sandwich in the afternoon and a dinner which, except on State occasions, seldom varied from a spoonful of soup, some cold roast beef and a pear. But she required four footmen to serve her tea and the utmost protocol and dignity in the service of her meagre dinner, while at Marlborough House her son, with much less ceremony, worked his way through eight or nine sumptuous courses. Flesh and blood could not stand such a regime forever, and when he was forty-seven the Prince had to take the first of his annual cures at Homburg, thus setting a new and beneficial fashion for the many Londoners who, like himself, consistently exceeded at table.

Before the Homburg visits began his visits to the Continent were made either incognito or for state reasons. He had become friendly with the Austrian Archduke Rudolf, and always defended him against the charges of loose living which were frequently brought against that unhappy young man. With Rudolf he went on shooting parties in Croatia and Hungary, and with Rudolf explored the nearer gaieties of Vienna, drinking new wine at the Semmering and strolling in the Prater. Vienna, with her *Stimmung* and her seductive little

Fritzis and Mitzis, pleased him very well, but still the Austrian capital had a faint Teutonic flavour which spoilt it by comparison with Paris. Paris at the moment was a little spoilt itself, for to the anti-British sentiment which had declared itself in the naval desertion at Alexandria and the subsequent — and quite illogical — anger at Britain for having assumed the sole control in Egypt, there was now added an anti-monarchical sentiment which had blazed up after more than ten years of republican government. The Comte de Chambord died childless in August 1883, having previously come to an understanding with the Orleans pretenders, who now that there were no more Bourbons, or Bonapartes of the direct line, were the sole claimants to the vacant throne. Just at this auspicious moment a sentence of expulsion was passed against the sons and grandsons of Louis Philippe, who had been established in France for some time, and once again these old friends of the Prince of Wales crossed the Channel and sought refuge in England.

Paris was not safe for princes, even His Royal Highness of Wales, but Paris soon changed her tune, and in 1886 a new and dashing figure dominated the boulevards in the person of General Boulanger. For a short time France trembled on the verge of a military dictatorship. Boulanger's followers were mainly drawn from the poor and discontented, but he had some support from the shortsighted Right, which only desired to overthrow the Government of M. Rouvier and refused to look beyond. Thus General de Gallifet was able to report to the Prince of Wales that 'the two most beautiful duchesses of France, Mesdames de la Tremouille and d'Uzes, were dining last night at the Café Durand so as to be the first to congratulate Boulanger. This they did in the company of all the apprentice-hairdressers of Paris . . . all this is not likely to give us back our place in Europe'. De Gallifet continued to pass on the most detailed accounts of Boulanger's progress, and the Prince was enabled to warn the British Cabinet that Boulangism would win no lasting success in France. At the same time he caused the exiled Comte de Paris to communicate with the Right politicians, with whom he still had some influence, and urge them to use their votes to keep Rouvier in power. The Boulanger movement broke for the time being against the solidity of the Government.

If Paris was temporarily a closed preserve, St. Petersburg was not very cheerful. The Prince and Princess of Wales went there in

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1881 when the Princess's sister and her husband succeeded to their magnificent but uneasy inheritance in tragic circumstances. The Czar Alexander II was assassinated in the streets of his capital, and his son's life was more like that of a captive in a beleaguered fortress than a great Emperor. The English visitors lived with their hosts at the gloomy old Anitchkoff Palace and seldom ventured forth. The two sisters were glad to be together, but the Prince was horrified to see the Czar meekly taking exercise in the only place deemed safe from the bombs of the Nihilists, a little stone courtyard inside the palace walls, which he roundly declared was less spacious than a London slum area. There was another dismal aspect of a cheerless situation — the revelation of the pious old Czar's private life in the persons of his mistress and illegitimate children, who could no longer be hidden, and whose appearance, if not exactly a surprise to the Prince, was a shock to such puritans as his sister Vicky.

Vicky and Fritz celebrated their silver wedding with full Teutonic ritual in January 1883, which was one of the most pleasant occasions on which the Prince ever visited Berlin. He had already celebrated another wedding in his sister's family, far more important than little Charlotte's, for Prince Wilhelm had married in February 1881 the Princess Augusta, daughter of that Duke of Augustenburg who had vainly claimed the Duchy of Holstein in 1864. Wilhelm was not a young man who was likely to follow the example of the late Czar, for women's society meant nothing to him: he was the disciple of Prince Bismarck and was happiest when surrounded by military men. Remembering his cult for the Highland dress, the Prince of Wales took him a magnificent outfit in Royal Stuart tartan, to wear at the costume ball of the silver wedding festivities. The Prince was enchanted; he hastened to a photographer, and sent his friends his portrait in his new finery, with the cryptic message, 'I bide my time', scrawled over the pasteboard. Can it be doubted that in his overheated imagination he had assumed the role of a Jacobite exile, planning to land on Scottish soil and win a crown?

The Prince of Wales laughed; but perhaps he would not have been sorry to see a trace of a more controlled vivacity in his own eldest son. Prince Albert Victor had now left the *Bacchante* and was to finish his education on land, while Prince George continued his naval career. The younger Prince, it was evident, resembled his grandfather the Consort in punctuality, order and all the methodical virtues, but

he was not fond of study, neither was he fond of Germans, and counted as a hardship his sojourn at Heidelberg 'learning their beastly language'. The elder Prince joined the 10th Hussars, and saw something of Army life until in the autumn of 1883 his father accompanied him to Cambridge and left him to the occupations of an ordinary undergraduate at Trinity College. His coming of age in 1885 was marked by prolonged rejoicing, and his father's pride in all the honours shown him was as evident as it was slightly pathetic. The young Prince was a frail creature, but he shouldered, manfully enough, his royal destiny and began the accepted round of official visits — to Ireland first and then to India, after which tour he was created Duke of Clarence.

The Prince of Wales' life in the later 'eighties seemed to fall into a trough of failure. He was well past his youth and beginning to pay for its excesses, his children were grown up and beyond his care, his mother's popularity was steadily on the increase so that his own suffered a little by comparison, and he was as far as ever from making any substantial contribution to the national good. The project which lay nearest his heart, the *entente cordiale*, had been defeated by the Anglo-French rupture over Egypt, and in Britain his advice was only taken on the cut of a coat, the vintage of a wine, or the promotion of an Exhibition. Now and again his mother appealed to him, as when she asked him to complain about Gladstone's Home Rule policy, but that was only because she found herself without a complete household, many lords and ladies having refused the royal service to show their disapproval of the Government. Or the Duke of Cambridge (Poor Uncle George) demanded his support in opposing Viscount Wolseley's scheme of Army reform, and he gave it because he thought the Crown should control the Army and Uncle George be bolstered up till Arthur could take his place. Or his friendship with Lord Randolph Churchill gave him the illusion of knowing the inner secrets of the Cabinet; but then in December 1886 the incalculable Lord Randolph resigned office with a suddenness embarrassing to his colleagues, and the Queen was writing in the old hectoring tone to say that she could not understand Bertie's friendship with this impulsive and unreliable man and asking that their correspondence should cease.

Even his attempts to retrieve partially a national humiliation had failed. The death of General Gordon at Khartoum had made a

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painful impression on him and he was as ready as the Queen to blame the delays of the Government in sending the relief expedition. When it became known that one of Gordon's men, Emin Pasha, still survived in a remote fort on the Nile, the Prince encouraged H. M. Stanley, an explorer famous for his success in finding lost missionaries, to head an expedition for his rescue. The intrepid Mr. Stanley departed in 1887. He penetrated tropical forests, he forded tropical rivers, and in the end he found his man. But unlike Dr. Livingstone, Emin Pasha did not respond cordially to being rescued. He found himself very well where he was, and flatly refused to return to England. Mr. Stanley had to come home alone, and in the circumstances it was poor comfort for his patron that he had found a new African lake and had christened it Albert Edward Nyanza.

The godfather of the lake, baffled in one more endeavour, could only comfort himself with the reflection that now, as the fiftieth year of her reign approached, the Queen had at last granted him access to her official dispatches.

CHAPTER V

BERLIN, 1888

THIS mark of royal confidence, though somewhat belated, was a sign of the times. It was now more than a quarter of a century since the Consort's death, and though she made a cult of his memory until her last day, Victoria was insensibly ceasing to seek the living among the dead. So many of her relatives and friends had gone from her that she was beginning to cling to those who remained, and foremost among them was the son whose affection and good-humour had never failed her. She had recently lost two of those on whom she had most relied, for John Brown had died in 1883 and Prince Leopold in 1884, and without her sturdy retainer and her delicate, companionable son she felt herself very lonely. 'I am a poor desolate old woman and my cup of sorrow overflows!' she exclaimed when the news came from Cannes of her son's death, and the Prince of Wales found it a more genuine cry of grief than the facile expression of her earlier woes. Her people, seeing in her now the bereaved mother as well as the eternal widow, felt their hearts warm towards the ageing woman who allowed neither mourning nor the physical pain from which she often suffered to turn her from her duty.

There was another cause, less obvious than the softening influences of bereavement, which drew the Queen to the Prince of Wales. For a long time now she had been inwardly convinced that what Albert had thought about Prussia in the eighteen-fifties was no longer applicable to the German Empire in the eighteen-eighties. The new Germany was no docile and domesticated land, but founded on military conquest and looking round for conquests of every sort. From 1880 onwards she had issued a formidable challenge to Britain in the economic sphere in which the island kingdom had been pre-eminent for so long. She was exploiting her natural resources of coal, iron and steel, developing her manufactures and the merchant fleet which should carry them overseas, and she had no lack of labour for all her enterprises, for under these prosperous conditions the population had nearly doubled itself. Factories sprang up by the banks of the Rhine and the Elbe, Bremen and Hamburg teemed with workers

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and their growing families: presently the cry for colonies was heard, so that this vigorous tide of life might find an outlet overseas.

Prince Bismarck, still the arbiter of German destinies, had for some time resisted the colonial proposals. He feared the rivalry of Britain, with whom he was not ready to try his strength, and he had been pursuing a more entertaining colonial policy in regard to France, whom he had been secretly encouraging to seek possessions overseas in the pious hope that she would further embroil herself with Britain thereby. Under the ministry of Jules Ferry, France had indeed established herself in Tunis, Annam, Tonkin and along the Congo, but in 1883 was involved with Britain in a dispute over her conquest of Madagascar where a French admiral had maltreated a British missionary. Queen Victoria, ever quick to resent any affront to her subjects, declared that the country had been insulted by the French and ought to insist on reparations. 'There was', she said, 'a growing tendency to swallow insults and affronts and not taking them up in that high tone which they used formerly to be.' The French paid an indemnity of £1,000.

Prince Bismarck knew that there was a great readiness among both the French and the British to resent any encroachments by the other, and he was anxious to ascertain how far that spirit would be carried by Britain into Anglo-German colonial relations. Accordingly he dispatched his son, Count Herbert Bismarck, to England for a long stay, on much the same mission as that of Joachim von Ribbentrop fifty years later — to meet prominent people and to try to overcome anti-German prejudice.

Count Herbert, an overbearing man with little finesse, was as successful in his mission as Ribbentrop: that is, he was taken up and fêted by a number of stupid society people, and felt able as a result to utter some profound opinions on the state of Britain. He threw dust in the eyes of quite a few who believed, as a certain section is always ready to believe, that German discipline is admirable and that military dictatorship would do Britain good: among those who were impressed by his propaganda was Lord Rosebery, who had strong views on the Anglo-Saxon inheritance. The Prince of Wales saw through Count Herbert from the start, and besides his personal dislike he had the evidence of Vicky's warnings and Vicky's unhappiness. The Bismarcks had been her enemies for years, and fate had been against her in her battle with them, for as long as Wilhelm I

lived — and he was now incredibly old — Bismarck ruled in Germany and Fritz and Vicky were nothing.

When Herbert Bismarck had gone about England for two years his father felt strong enough to indulge the German desire for colonies. This departure shocked the Crown Princess. She wrote to her mother, 'The Germans are of an *arrogance* that one *longs* to see put down, especially their tone towards England. Their idea of colonies I think very foolish and I do not fancy they will succeed, but they are as jealous of England as they possibly can be'. The days were past when she herself had shared the German arrogance and boasted of the German victories, and the hapless Crown Princess, whose misfortune it was, as the Prince of Wales acutely said, to be an Englishwoman in Germany and a German in England, now turned more openly against the country where she felt herself surrounded by hostile observers.

She was wrong about the colonies. Prince Bismarck had a habit of success, and while naive British statesmen like Salisbury and Granville were waiting for him to obey the accepted rules of protocol he quickly and adroitly occupied some African territories — all on the borders of British protectorates. The Crown Prince disapproved, but Bismarck had ceased to think of the Crown Prince as the man of to-morrow. Prince Wilhelm was his future Emperor, and though he had done his best to influence that brilliant unsteady brain he knew that the young man required no prompting to hate England. The old Junker was not a psychologist: he wasted no time trying to account for this hatred, burning behind such erratic English enthusiasms, such real affection for the Prince's English grandmother. For Prince Wilhelm had loved the England of his childish memories until it became confused in his mind with the frustrated mother-image that grew as he realized the limitations of his withered arm, for which he held the Crown Princess responsible. He tried to compensate himself for the physical disability by a series of deeds and gestures which should strike awe into the hearts of his English relations. And he too lay under the shadow of the Hanoverian inheritance, which decreed that a royal parent and a royal heir should never be friends. He and his mother were like Victoria and Albert Edward, like George IV and Charlotte, like George II and Frederick, and though he disliked his Uncle Bertie he resembled him in a violent reaction against his upbringing. His mother by an exagger-

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ated insistence on the superiority of all things English had driven her son to the opposite extreme.

The talents of Victoria and Albert were nowhere so evident in the second generation of their descendants as in the case of their eldest grandchild. It is too easy to dismiss Wilhelm as a posing fool. His goods, as the saying is, were all in the shop window, but they covered a remarkably wide range of stock, and with a little more stability in his character he would have been an excellent ruler. That he was hysterical and passionate was not only an individual but also a national defect. Wilhelm, in fact, was an admirable expression of the German mentality of his heyday. Bismarck personified the spirit of 1870, but the Germany of 1900, with its manifold activities, its armament plans and its inferiority complex was perfectly represented by Kaiser Wilhelm II. This fact has to be borne in mind throughout the long duel between the Kaiser and King Edward VII, for otherwise it may too hastily be assumed that the King allowed his personal dislike of his nephew to shape his policy. That their personal relations aggravated the deterioration of Anglo-German relations there is no doubt, but the King was fighting a more subtle enemy than the headstrong son of his sister. He was fighting the whole brutal dishonest German spirit, personified for the time being by the man at the head of the nation.

Their long antipathy, so far as the Kaiser was concerned, began some time before his accession. In 1885 Prince Wilhelm, writing to the Czar (for with the two Czars of his manhood he was forever coquetting), revealed his fear of an 'English' conspiracy at Berlin. 'The visit of the Prince of Wales has yielded and is still bringing extraordinary fruit which will continue to multiply under the hands of my mother and the Queen of England. But these English have accidentally forgotten that *I* exist!' His affectionate wish for the English was, 'May the Mahdi chuck them all into the Nile!' and through the endless vindictive boasting runs the thread of his warning: beware the false and intriguing nature of the Prince of Wales. Nor did the uncle lag behind in condemnation of his nephew: in the privacy of his family he succinctly described him as a braggart, a liar and a menace to the peace of Europe. For a time, of course, his English relatives ignored Wilhelm in the belief that his excellent and liberal-minded father would enjoy a long reign, during which his son would outgrow his youthful extravaganzas, but before the

end of 1886 some disquieting news arrived from Berlin. Fritz Wilhelm had an affection of the throat. At his wife's urgent request, an English specialist, Morell MacKenzie, went out to examine him, and his treatment by this Englishman turned out to be one more cause of controversy between the Crown Princess and the German leaders.

The illness of her son-in-law was the only stain on the brilliance of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. He was able to attend the celebrations, but his voice was by this time considerably affected, and the silent gigantic figure in the white uniform of the Cuirassiers of the Guard, who looked like a Wagnerian hero of real life, was already only the husk of a man. The Queen resolutely put aside her forebodings: even her robust pessimism was overcome by the joy and admiration of her people and by the tributes which poured in from all the world to her fifty years of victorious and dutiful sovereignty. The princes and proconsuls of her vast Empire, the princes of the reigning houses of Europe, the princes and princesses who were her descendants unto the third generation laid their homage at her feet, and through all the ceremonies Bertie was at her side, ready to support her, directing the others, trying, she knew — but that was impossible — to take his father's place.

The Prince of Wales took a leading part in organizing the Jubilee festivities and in entertaining the various celebrities who attended them. He was equal to any occasion, whether it was proposing the Queen's health at the State Banquet in Buckingham Palace on Jubilee night, or at the children's picnic in Hyde Park next day, when he coaxed a shy little girl to approach the royal carriage with a bouquet on the ribbon of which was inscribed —

‘God Bless our Queen, not Queen alone,
But Mother, Queen and Friend.’

That was how they thought of her in London, where twenty years before she had been so unpopular — as mother and friend, and her photograph, with a quite unusually affable expression, was hawked in the streets and bought to adorn the humblest homes in the land. Her daughters, who found the photograph ‘grinning’, wanted to stop its sale, but the truthful Queen observed, ‘Well, really I think it is *very like*. I have *no* illusions about my personal appearance’. One of her good points had always been a ready admiration of

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beauty in other women — the Empress Eugénie, the Duchesse de Nemours, the Princess of Wales — but she disliked vanity, and was still perfectly capable of reproaching Alexandra for an exaggerated arrangement of the massed curls on her forehead.

The Jubilee celebrations, with their unrivalled opportunities for new jewels and new toilettes which thrilled all the ladies of her family and court except the Queen (*she* wore her wedding lace and the Koh-i-noor diamond), came to an end at last, and there was only time for one more festive occasion before the expected blow fell in Berlin. This was the silver wedding of the Prince and Princess of Wales, which was celebrated on March 10th, 1888, in imitation of the German festival of Vicky and Fritz. There was no hope of a visit from them, for the Crown Prince lay mortally ill at San Remo, and on the very day before the silver wedding-day his father, the aged Emperor Wilhelm I, died at Berlin.

The domestic festival could not well be postponed, and Court mourning was relaxed for a day while the Queen went to her son's home and found Alix 'who was in white and silver with lovely jewels, looking more like a bride just married than the Silver one of twenty-five years.' Gifts had arrived from all over the Empire, including a gift of money, collected in small sums throughout the colonies, which the progressive Prince intended to spend on a silver candelabrum wired for electric light. For illumination had gone a long way beyond the candles of 1841, and another modern invention, the telephone, had already been used by the Queen at Liverpool in 1886. The world of 1888 was a brave new world, and yet the drama which was then unfolding itself at Berlin was not modern, but contained all the elements of classical tragedy.

On the day after the silver wedding Archbishop Magee wrote to a brother churchman, 'Did you ever in your eminently respectable life dance on the tight-rope? And did you ever do so in the presence of royalty? No? Then I have beaten you'. The Archbishop had been asked to preach the silver wedding sermon, and in the course of it had to refer to that happy event, to the death of the German Emperor, to the illness of his successor, and, with a certain lack of sequence, to the Gordon Boys' Home, for which the Prince desired the offertory to be taken. This patchwork sermon suited the nature of the Prince's life at that time, and he, much more than the embarrassed divine, was about to dance on a tight-rope. He went from the

festivities of his home to the funeral of the German Emperor, thence back to London until recalled to Berlin in May for the very quiet wedding of his nephew Prince Henry to his niece Princess Irene of Hesse; back again to the London season until one June day at Ascot he received the news of his brother-in-law's death. Then he hastened to Berlin once more to comfort the sister who had been his first play-mate and who now saw an Imperial Crown pass from her hands almost before she could grasp it.

During the brief reign of the dying man the Prince fell foul of Count Herbert Bismarck, who, with brutal insensibility, announced that an Emperor who could not talk was unfit to reign. His conversations with Count Herbert were not happy, and were certainly too frank, for the younger Bismarck afterwards twisted them to suit his father's ends, whence came much explanation and denial. It was the Queen who cowed Bismarck *père* — Bismarck *fils* was too small a quarry for her to waste powder on — when she visited Berlin in April.

To add to the tight-rope quality of the Berlin situation there was the fact that the new Emperor's daughter Victoria was much in love with Prince Alexander of Battenberg, the erstwhile ruler of Bulgaria, and as he had lost his throne at the will of Russia, Victoria's brother Wilhelm forbade the match on the grounds that it would create difficulties between Germany and Russia. Bismarck had been sneering about Queen Victoria's visit, for the Prince was a favourite of hers, and the Chancellor supposed that she intended to marry the young couple out of hand; whereupon Lord Salisbury suggested to the Queen, then in Italy, that her German visit should be postponed. This she indignantly refused to do, and presently Prince Bismarck realized that it was one thing to laugh at the Queen when she was safely in Italy and another when she was actually in Berlin. She received him at the British Embassy; and the great man was seen to be very uneasy as he waited in her ante-room. When he emerged from her presence he was sweating and dabbing at his forehead and all he would say of the interview was 'There was a woman! One could do business with her!'

The painful visit came to an end, and the Queen left Berlin much affected by her daughter's situation. 'My poor poor child, what would I not do to help her in her hard lot!' she exclaimed as the train bore her away from the weeping Empress. Within two months

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the blow had fallen and the Empress Frederick had need of all her friends. Her brother hastened to her side and, scant courtesy as he expected from his nephew, he was outraged by the young man's coldness and malice towards his mother. Her home was ransacked by his order, and only because she had had the forethought to confide them to one of the English entourage of the Prince of Wales did her letters and the diary of her husband's illness escape the search which was made for them. The new Emperor was drunk with an access of supreme power. He was ready to turn his mother out of the Neues Palais bag and baggage, and suggested that she might live at the Villa Liegnitz, a modest dwelling used by Prince Henry before his marriage.

The Prince of Wales had to invoke his mother's aid to cope with this situation. He could do nothing with his nephew in his present mood, for Count Herbert Bismarck had revealed the gist of their conversations and the Emperor chose to be deeply offended. Count Herbert exaggerated, but it is certain that the Prince had long cherished the hopes which he had somewhat naively set forth — that the Emperor Frederick would, on his accession, restore Schleswig-Holstein to Denmark, Alsace-Lorraine to France and the revenues of his father's possessions in Hanover to the Duke of Cumberland. How far he had reason to hope for such a sweeping abnegation could never be proved by documentary evidence, and his attempts to find out what Wilhelm II's views would be only ended in a burst of rage from the Emperor, who had no intention of giving away any of his possessions, whether his father had wished it or not.

The Queen, aware of this friction, tried to mend matters by adopting a soothing tone with her grandson. Dulcet were the words she used to point out that the Villa Liegnitz was not a suitable home for an Empress-Dowager who was also the Princess Royal of Great Britain; cajoling was her entreaty 'to bear with poor Mama if she is sometimes irritated and excited'. But before very long she perceived that Wilhelm took fair words for a sign of weakness, since in October a new difficulty arose between him and his uncle.

The Emperor had begun, far earlier than strict court mourning permitted, a series of visits to his brother sovereigns. It was the Prince of Wales himself who, thinking no evil, let him know that he (the Prince) would be in Vienna on a private visit to the Imperial family at the same time as the German Emperor proposed to be there —

whereupon Wilhelm, raging, refused point-blank to meet his uncle in Vienna. He said that his uncle never treated him as an Emperor but only as a nephew, he said that he intended to cut the British Ambassador — he said everything, and the upshot was that the Prince of Wales, who had had to yield precedence in Vienna to the father in 1873, now actually had to leave the capital in favour of the son. During the week of the Kaiser's visit he visited the King and Queen of Rumania at Sinaia, returning to Vienna when the coast was clear, where he found that, thanks to the personal intervention of the Archduke Rudolf, his august nephew had at least condescended to recognize the British Ambassador. Rudolf had other things on his mind than the rivalries of Princes that autumn, for he had just fallen in love with a charming young Baroness called Marie Vetsera.

This incident caused great indignation at Windsor. The Queen passed over Bismarck's specious explanation that if the Kaiser had met his uncle at a foreign court he might have annoyed the Emperor of Russia: this was a personal, not a political matter, and the only person of consequence who paid much attention to Bismarck was Lord Salisbury. The grandmother was furious at Wilhelm's pretensions to be treated as an Emperor in private as well as in public. It was perfect madness, she said: he was treated by his uncle exactly as she had always been treated by *her* dear uncle, King Leopold, and 'if he had *such* notions he had better never come here'. When she heard that her grandson expected his uncle to write him a very kind letter which 'perhaps' he might answer, her reply was that the Prince of Wales must *not* submit to such treatment.

Matters were in this state when the time drew near for the Empress Frederick's projected visit to her mother in November — the first since her bereavement. Vicky had lived for six months in retirement, daily more aware that her portion would henceforth be slights and insults, and her heart longed for home. Now it seemed as if she might have to forego her wishes, for Lord Salisbury was not sure that to invite her to England might not further exacerbate the temper of her son and thus jeopardize the relationship with Russia. Even the Prince of Wales, angry as he was, was inclined to side with Lord Salisbury. The Queen confronted them with all the domineering majesty of her nature. How dared they subject the Queen of England to the whims of Kaiser or of Czar, or prevent a bereaved daughter from reaching the peace of her mother's home? Apart

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from all such considerations, the gesture would be useless. As she shrewdly said, 'It would only encourage the Emperor and the Bismarcks. You all seem frightened of them which is not the way to make them better'.

In one simple sentence the Queen had rejected the doctrine of appeasement and penetrated to the heart of the German mentality.

Her firm attitude had the expected result. Wilhelm became more amenable, and while he did not exactly apologize for his conduct at Vienna he made a few evasive overtures of friendship which his amiable uncle was quite willing to accept. A year later, on the first anniversary of his accession, the Queen rewarded him for his improved behaviour by creating him an Honorary Admiral of the Fleet. 'Fancy wearing the same uniform as St. Vincent and Nelson!' he exclaimed. 'It is enough to make me quite giddy!' And he added, 'I am now able to feel and take interest in your Fleet as if it were my own, and with keenest sympathy shall I watch every phase of its further development'.

He was wearing the new uniform when he descended upon his grandmother at Osborne, and in his nautical character was very anxious that the Queen, aboard the royal yacht, should review the German vessels of his escort, while their bands played the British national anthem. After such a beginning Cowes was almost an anticlimax, although he was much pleased when his Uncle Bertie made him a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron. Cowes had long been a favourite engagement of the Prince of Wales, who had greatly enjoyed racing his famous yacht, *Britannia*, but William's strident presence spoilt Cowes for him that season, and he made an excuse to get away to Aldershot. The new British Admiral was still pre-occupied with the sea for some time after his return to Germany, and when the Channel Squadron visited Kiel in October the Kaiser telegraphed reassuringly to his grandmother to tell her that he had inspected her ships and found them in perfect order and trim.

Such was the inauspicious start of Wilhelm's transactions as Kaiser with his English relatives. For the next ten years he pursued his erratic way, sometimes loving the British, sometimes cursing them, but never able for one moment to forget them. Once, when putting forward his resemblance to his mother as a reason for quarrelling with her, he spoke enthusiastically of that which ran in her veins and his, the 'good stubborn English blood which will not give way'.

In truth his streak of English blood was thin enough, but it wrought havoc in his system: it kept him where Britain was concerned still and always the small boy who, at a far-off wedding, had thrown the jewel from his dirk across the choir so as to distract attention from his uncle to himself. Mortally jealous of the Prince of Wales, he was doomed constantly to seek him out — to invite him to Germany or to visit him in Britain. In 1890 he was at his most amiable when the Prince of Wales and Prince George visited Berlin. Loud welcoming music was played, armies were deployed in mimic warfare, pious wreaths were laid on tombs and all was brotherly love. Well there might be, thought the Prince, for 1890 was a fortunate year for Wilhelm. Without going to war or making any effort he had gained a useful acquisition — the Island of Heligoland, which Lord Salisbury had actually offered to barter in exchange for the protectorate of Zanzibar. It was understood that the Government was actuated by humane motives, and wished to do good to the inhabitants of Zanzibar; and the Kaiser, not to be outdone, spoke of the boon which Heligoland, properly equipped, would be to the fishermen of the North Sea; but before very long it was evident that the fishermen were not to benefit, for Heligoland was turned into a strong place — a fortress guarding the new Kiel Canal. This development the Queen and the Prince could not exactly envisage, but they viewed the transaction with foreboding. Why give more land to Germany, which had seized so much in the past thirty years? ‘Giving up what one has is always a bad thing,’ said the Queen, and she feared that the Germans would regard Heligoland as a form of Danegeld — unsolicited, but still a token of far greater payments to come.

CHAPTER VI

TRANBY CROFT, 1891

At fifty years of age the Prince of Wales was a grandfather. His eldest daughter, Princess Louise, had been married in 1889 to a friend and contemporary of her father, the Earl of Fife, and though the bridegroom was made a Duke in honour of the event there was nothing very romantic or brilliant about the match. A future Princess Royal might have aspired to higher things, especially when her father had strong views on the dynastic marriage, but there was a considerable shortage of eligible Protestant princes in Europe, and unless Louise had embraced Greek Orthodoxy and with it her young cousin the Czarevitch Nicholas there would have been nothing for it but the inevitable German princeling. A middle-aged Scotsman was better than that, and the Prince of Wales gave her to his friend with a good grace. A connoisseur of the sex, he realized that his daughters, those nice, modest, dutiful girls, would never carry away the fairy prince from six other princesses as the young Alexandra had done in the Cathedral at Speier, and the next best thing was to ensure their happiness. So he welcomed Louise's two little daughters, Alexandra and Maud, and when a few years later his own daughter Maud became attached to her cousin Charles, the inconspicuous second son of the Crown Prince of Denmark, he approved that marriage also.

The marriage of Princess Louise raised a question of considerable importance to the monarchy. The descendants of Queen Victoria and her Consort were now very numerous, for of their nine children only one, the Princess Louise, had been childless, even the invalid Prince Leopold being survived by a daughter and a posthumous son. These orphan children and the families of the three surviving Princes were resident in Britain and required to be supported in a fitting manner, Prince Alfred alone having additional means in the revenues of the Duchy of Coburg. Moreover, Princess Helena and Princess Beatrice had married relatively poor men, and their progeny had to be considered. Only the families of Vicky and Alice were beyond the British financial orbit.

All the nine children of Victoria had their incomes from the Civil List and until the offspring of the Prince of Wales were marriageable no provision whatever was made for the second generation. In his case, it might have been supposed, and was supposed, that a gentleman with £100,000 a year could well afford to give a daughter a dowry or set up a son in a separate establishment, but this, it appeared, was impossible. Setting aside entirely the vexed question of debts, the Prince asserted that he had to spend huge sums on entertaining distinguished foreigners, as well as on charity, and was quite unable to make suitable allowances to his children — which was, in any case, the national privilege. The Radicals did not see it like that, and a heated debate took place in the House of Commons, the most damaging point made being that the Queen certainly spent nothing on entertainments and as she was an enormously rich woman it was for her to subsidize her grandchildren. Mr. Stead and Mr. Labouchère joined Mr. Burt, the miners' representative, in such a chorus of condemnation of the Queen as had been heard twenty years before. 'It is the firework side of the royal job that she has scamped' — 'As the other party has saved a million out of the difference it is only fair that she should provide for her grandchildren without making any further demands on the taxpayer'. *Truth* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* vied with each other in sarcasms, and one of Stead's bitterest efforts was the comparison of the Queen to a commercial traveller receiving travelling allowance at first class fare who goes third class in order that he may pocket the difference.

The Prince and Mr. Gladstone discussed the matter privately. They agreed that it was useless to ask for separate allowances for each child or to suggest allowances for any of the other royal grandchildren. The Prince of Wales' Children Bill had a chequered passage through the House and provided finally for an annual transference of £36,000 from the Consolidated Fund to the Prince's own income, by him to be disbursed among his sons and daughters as he thought fit.

By a strange coincidence the Prince and his mother both came under the lash of public opinion at the same time, and for the old reasons. Her partial emergence from her long seclusion and the splendours of the Jubilee had not been sufficient to erase from prejudiced minds the memory of her long retirement, and although the Prince was in his fiftieth year there was evidence that time had

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not cooled the blood of 'Guelpho the Gay'. In the summer of 1891 he was involved in a scandal far more shocking to the general public than the Mordaunt divorce suit and was once again summoned to the Courts of Justice as a witness in the great Tranby Croft case.

The details of the famous Baccarat Scandal have been so thoroughly canvassed as to be devoid of any novelty and are only of interest for the light they throw on the society of the period. In September 1890 the Prince of Wales attended the Doncaster race meeting, as was his custom, and on this occasion he was the guest of Mr. Arthur Wilson, a Hull magnate, who owned a country estate called Tranby Croft. There was a large and somewhat mixed company of guests, including a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Scots Guards, Sir William Gordon-Cumming of Altyre; one of his subalterns, Mr. Berkeley Levett; the son of the house, Mr. A. S. Wilson; his sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Lycett Green, and various others who played minor roles in the drama. On the first night of the party a game of baccarat was proposed, for which the counters were provided by the Prince of Wales, and during the game Mr. A. S. Wilson thought he saw Sir William Gordon-Cumming cheat by the simple method of increasing or decreasing his stake in counters by a furtive movement of the hand according as he held good cards or bad. Mr. Wilson's proceedings were thereafter highly imprudent. He confided his suspicions, not to his father, who as the master of the house had the first right to know what was going on, but to his mother, his sister, his brother-in-law and Mr. Berkeley Levett, and they agreed to keep a watch on the following night, when it seemed to these five amateur detectives that Sir William had cheated again.

The next day they took into their confidence two less observant guests, Lord Coventry and General Owen Williams, and the seven decided to tell the Prince of Wales. The Prince had been keeping the bank, and had had no suspicion of cheating. He was horrified at the story, but his first idea was that a public scandal must be avoided — not so much for his own sake, as for his host's, and for the prevention of washing dirty linen in public, from which he was always averse. Accordingly he interviewed Sir William in the presence of witnesses and promised that if he would sign a paper pledging himself never to play cards for money again his secret would be kept. Sir William, protesting his innocence, made the fatal mistake of signing this document, which was a tacit admission of

guilt, and the Prince of Wales, signing first of the witnesses, placed it among his private papers.

A secret known to so many people was bound to leak out, and before long Sir William was apprised of this by an anonymous letter from Paris. Thereupon he brought an action for defamatory slander against the five persons who had alleged that he cheated on the second night and cited the Prince of Wales as a witness.

The issue of the case was only of importance to himself. The jury found for the five defendants, and Sir William left the court a discredited man, but it was not upon him that universal execration fell. That was reserved for the Prince of Wales, whose private game of cards was magnified into the sin against the Holy Ghost, and who was the target of the entire Press, since not only his old friends *Truth* and *Reynolds* but all the denominational journals and the serious newspapers, led by *The Times* itself, united to condemn the laxity of his life. What! he travelled with baccarat counters in his luggage, did he? He kept the bank at the gambling table where financiers and subalterns sat down on an equality with the heir to the throne, did he? Pretty company, and a useful life indeed for a man of fifty, going from the racecourse to the card-table with an interval for gormandizing in between! Who were these Wilsons — had they anything to commend them besides their opulence? Did the Queen go to stay with people called Wilson and keep the bank at baccarat?

Imagination quailed at the last suggestion. The Queen's integrity seemed more durable, more admirable than ever by comparison with her son. Mr. Stead, in the *Review of Reviews*, invented the test of the 'Prayer Gauge'. He calculated that since the day of his birth 880,000,000 prayers had been offered for the Prince of Wales in the churches of the United Kingdom, and the only answer vouchsafed from above was the Tranby Croft scandal. It was certainly not encouraging.

Foreign newspapers described this blow to British hypocrisy with a great deal of relish. The French said some vitriolic things, but for once were surpassed in wit by the German cartoonist who drew a new version of the Prince of Wales' crest, with the motto, '*Ich Dien*' exchanged for '*Ich Deal*'. The German Emperor said his say: he smugly reprobated his uncle's conduct, which he found particularly disgusting in a grandfather. The House of Commons joined the

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chorus, and with reason, for as was pointed out in that assembly the Prince of Wales and General Williams, to say nothing of young Mr. Levett, were guilty of a dereliction of duty, for Army Regulations required such a charge against an officer to be submitted to his superiors. The Prince was compelled to admit that he had made 'an error of judgment'. It was a serious admission from one who within a few years might be crowned as the fount of justice. His conduct throughout had not shown much respect for the Law, for the moralists were certain that Sir William should have been publicly condemned and given a chance to clear himself, without any underhand work with documents and pledges of secrecy made to be broken.

For some time the Prince presented a dignified silence in the face of his attackers. Then, after his admission of error to the House of Commons, he began to defend himself: he sent a *communiqué* to the press regarding the rumour that he himself had put up Mr. A. S. Wilson for membership of the Marlborough Club, stating that he did not even know the young man at the time his name was entered. Next he sent for the Archbishop of Canterbury, whom he suspected of encouraging the hue and cry against him in the Church press, but who, like most modern churchmen, preferred not to tackle royalty to its face. Summoned to Marlborough House, however, Archbishop Benson spoke, and afterwards wrote to him, with frankness on the evils of gambling, 'the hopeless ruin of young and old among the poorer classes'. The Prince's defence was not very convincing. He believed that there was a national instinct for betting, but, he said, he had a horror of gambling and should always do his utmost to discourage others who had an inclination for it. He evidently did not think that his private set of counters was an encouragement to gamble, or realize that while it may have been permissible for him to risk five pounds on a game of chance, his example might be fatal to those of his future subjects who could not afford to risk five shillings. It was a miserable business altogether, and long after the sensation-hunting press had found a new tit-bit, some of the mud which it had so comprehensively thrown stuck to the Prince of Wales.

The Tranby Croft scandal had an unfortunate effect on his home life. His wife, like charity, had suffered long, and was kind, but that autumn she took the extreme step of going away on what was obviously meant to be a long visit, since from Copenhagen she accompanied the Czar and Czarina to Livadia in the Crimea. For thirty

years she had obeyed the first commandment of Victorian wives, which was, to suffer in silence — for the double standard of morals was never so earnestly practised as at that time. Ladies turned a blind eye on the shortcomings of their lords, and solaced injured hearts by doing good works, for the motto of *noblesse oblige*, signally forgotten at Tranby Croft, still impelled gentlewomen to hide their wounds from the public gaze. Happy were those who, like the Princess of Wales, had the means and the excuse for a little judicious travel! The Prince of Wales was left to keep his fiftieth birthday as a bachelor, but he did not profit by his freedom. On the day before, his second son was attacked by a fever, later pronounced to be enteric, and soon lay gravely ill at Sandringham. When this news reached Livadia, the Princess of Wales travelled night and day across Europe, and all scandals were forgotten as the parents stood together by the bedside of their son.

Prince George did not die. His recovery gladdened a Christmas rendered especially happy by the betrothal of the Duke of Clarence to Princess May of Teck, an event which elicited from Queen Victoria an oblique reference to the most notorious happening of the year 1891, when she expressed the hope that 'the young people will set an example of a steady, quiet life, which, alas, is not the fashion in these days'. Tranby Croft had given the Queen a final distaste for fashionable ways.

These new hopes were destined to be short-lived. In the New Year the young Duke caught a cold, which became an influenza: his delicate constitution, weakened by a bout of typhoid fever from which he had suffered like his father and his grandfather before him, could not support the inroads of pneumonia. He died on January 14th, lamented by his family, though it is doubtful whether the country, which scarcely knew him, felt his loss, as the Queen expected, 'to be an awful blow'. To his father it was truly a blow, and there was sincerity in the Prince's cry, 'Gladly would I have given my life for his as I put no value on mine!'

He had reached a period when life as he had led it could only fill him with a weary disgust. Bereaved and disappointed in private, pilloried in public, frustrated in service, he looked about him in vain for an elixir which should revive his jaded spirits. Life must go on, and the succession be assured: mindful of the arrangement which had raised Dagmar of Denmark to be Czarina in spite of the death

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of her first betrothed, he welcomed the engagement of Princess May of Teck to his new heir and saw them happily established together as the Duke and Duchess of York. Life must go on, and to distract his thoughts he turned to good works again, joining the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, putting questions and drawing Union Jacks with some of his old industry. Young Mr. George Lansbury came up from the East End to tell him why aged paupers objected to the dress and to the food and to the whole social stigma of the workhouse, which Mr. Charles Dickens had already and more vividly explained in *Oliver Twist*. Old Age Pensions were also discussed by the Commission, and the Prince of Wales was one of the first to put the pertinent question, which the more extreme advocates of the pensions movement are seldom able to answer coherently, How much is all this going to cost the nation? But the Royal Commission became too political in its discussions for the heir to the throne, who could take no part in politics, and he resigned from it. He took up his Freemasonry again, and went up and down the country opening lodges and charitable institutions. He was a master mason indeed, for the trowel was never long out of his hand at this time, when the great prosperity of Britain caused building after new building to be erected, all requiring a royal personage to open them with a golden key and endure a loyal address from some loquacious functionary. The personage most in demand was that royal maid-of-all-work, the Prince of Wales; and the way to his private hell of boredom was paved with foundation stones.

CHAPTER VII

PARIS, 1895

DURING all these tribulations the Prince of Wales had found unfailing comfort in his visits to Paris. These trips were necessarily incognito, for Anglo-French relations were in an unhealthy state, and there was no question of official visits. Some of the great châteaux were closed now, and he had fewer friends to visit in the provinces, but his old companions, Messieurs de Gallifet, du Lau and de Breteuil were ever ready to welcome him back to the *grande vie* and the boulevards. Thanks to them he was able to explore every division of contemporary French society, and acquainting himself with the inner workings of French politics was an exercise of which he never tired.

General Boulanger had had a longer run for his money than de Gallifet and the Prince had expected. In 1888 he had a recrudescence of power for the typically Gallic reason that the son-in-law of the President was involved in a financial scandal, thereby obliging M. Jules Grévy to resign his exalted position in favour of M. Sadi Carnot. Throughout 1888 the supporters of Boulanger extolled their hero and compared his probity with the corruption of the Government, but by 1889 his course was run and the Government, feeling itself stronger, deprived him of his military command. The General fled to England and in his absence was sentenced to imprisonment in a fortress. In London he gravitated naturally towards Lord Randolph Churchill, for the descendant of the great Duke of Marlborough seemed to have an inherent taste for swashbuckling adventurers. He had just returned from a journey to Russia which had annoyed all responsible people except the Prince of Wales, for he had turned a private visit into an official mission and had taken a share in international politics which no one had authorized him to take. So Lord Randolph was in disgrace, and unrepentant since the Prince, who found him refreshing, had not cast him off, and it was at his table that his patron was able to gratify a longstanding curiosity and met the notorious French general. More perspicacious than the beautiful duchesses and the hairdressers' assistants, the Prince of Wales quickly decided that there was nothing behind

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Boulanger's showy façade and was not surprised when, some time later, he committed suicide in Belgium.

The Prince had one gift denied to the great majority of British statesmen: he was able to take a long view of French politics. He had seen three different varieties of French sovereign in exile: he had listened to Paris cheering the alliance of 1855 and his own proposals for an *entente cordiale* in 1878, and he had heard cheers turn to snarls on the boulevards and see Britain execrated for her rapacity and her tyranny. He had watched a Bonaparte seize the power by a military *coup d'état* and a Boulanger fail at the same game. He had seen Bazaine on trial for treachery and knew that in the hour of defeat France must always have a scapegoat. He had listened to French leaders like Gambetta who hated Germany and longed for vengeance, and he knew that there were others who would sell their country to Germany if the price were high enough. And after forty years' direct personal experience of the country he still loved France — in spite of the French.

He knew that with that passionate race no passion endures for long, but he did believe that a thousand years of enmity had ground hatred of Germany into their souls forever, and he believed also that eight hundred years of rivalry with Britain could be overcome to serve the greater hatred. That was the faith on which he proposed to gamble, for a stake higher than any which had been named at Tranby Croft.

After Boulanger, Déroulède, and after Déroulède, Dreyfus. The most individualistic nation in Europe had to have an individual to worship, to revile, or to punish — always provided that the individual were changed at frequent intervals. A bout of nationalism, a phase of anti-Semitism, a great deal of Anglophobia, were just what was required to enliven the sobriety of the Third Republic. Sometimes there was a revolutionary phase, as when in 1889 an Exhibition was held to commemorate the events of a hundred years before: but that was going too far for the Prince of Wales, who declined to organize the British section of an exposition in honour of the overthrow of monarchy. The Lord Mayor of London took the Prince's place, to the chagrin of the French, who as a nation were nearly as expert as Queen Victoria at eating their cake and having it too, and who would have dearly liked to revile Britain, and to boast about how *ce noceur* the Prince of Wales loved them, at one and the same time. As it was they had to content themselves with the numerous visits

he paid incognito to see the Exhibition and the wonderful new Tour Eiffel.

Two years later the Empress Frederick had a disagreeable experience in Paris, being hooted and insulted in the street in memory of her husband's generalship in the Franco-Prussian War. The Kaiser was naturally indignant, and planned a subtle punishment for the French — a triumphal tour through the conquered provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. The real subtlety would lie in being accompanied by the Prince of Wales, who always stood up for the French. Let him see them writhing under the heel of the All-Highest! But the Prince of Wales declined the invitation to visit Alsace-Lorraine under these auspices. He was sorry for his sister, but he did not propose to jeopardize his own position in France on her behalf.

Jealousy, of course, was at the bottom of the strained Anglo-French relations, and Bismarck's expectations had been amply justified, for the French in their search for colonies had everywhere encountered the established and Imperial power of Britain. Having failed to assert themselves at the crucial test of the Dual Control, they had struggled ever since to re-establish themselves in Egypt — if not at the Nile delta then at its head-waters. Their expansion on the Congo, which had already brought them into conflict with Britain and Belgium, was designed to provide a starting-place for the penetration of the Nile Valley. In Newfoundland, in the New Hebrides, in Siam, the French encountered the British on fields less bloody but no less decisive than Plassey and Quebec. And while the French struggled desperately for a few kilometres of mud on the banks of a tropical river, or the Germans plotted for the declaration of another petty African protectorate the British had added, between 1884 and 1894, two and a half million square miles of territory to their Empire.

Since 1893 France had had an alliance which went a long way to compensate her for her lack of extensive dominions. This alliance, the first made by the Third Republic, was with Russia, a surprising conclusion to the obstinate enmity shown by Russia to France at any time from the Treaty of Tilsit onwards. France, the home of revolutions and the friend of Poland, had long been anathema to the great autocracy, and the strains of Russian bands discoursing the *Marseillaise* when official visits were exchanged caused more than one ambassador to hide a smile. The German Ambassador did not smile, for the Kaiser had hoped that Russia would make an alliance

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with Germany; but the accession of a new Czar in the year after the alliance gave France a fresh reassurance that Russia was pulling away from the pro-German bias which she had shown since the Schleswig-Holstein affair.

The Czar Alexander III died suddenly in the autumn of 1894 and his son, Nicholas II, hastened on his marriage with the Princess Alix of Hesse. The Prince of Wales was related to both these young people, for the Czar was his sister-in-law's son and Princess Alix the daughter of his beloved sister Alice: 'Gentle simple Alicky' Queen Victoria called her, and marvelled to think that her modest grand-daughter was to be 'the great Empress of Russia'. A look of sadness and strain seemed natural to Princess Alix, even in the early days of her betrothal, and at the wedding, celebrated in the midst of mourning, she was very glad of her Uncle Bertie's robust presence. There were some evil omens at the bridal, as at the wedding of Marie Antoinette; a scaffolding collapsed and there was blood on the snow. The young Empress was fearful, but Uncle Bertie, who was not superstitious, talked her fears away. He stayed with his nephew and niece until the worst of their ordeal was over, and went away confirmed in their tender affection. The French might sign treaties, the Kaiser write blandishing letters, but Uncle Bertie had only to be himself to be sure of the affection of his Russian kinsfolk.

These family feelings did not prevent the French from gloating over their alliance as if the Russian friendship were exclusive to themselves. They had combined the signing of the treaty in 1893 with a pyrotechnic outburst of Anglophobia: it was scarcely safe for British residents in Paris to go into the streets while the French were in that mood. The gratification of the childish Latin lust for admiration, the proof given to the world that someone valued the friendship of the French, had gone to their heads. For the time being there was nothing they would not have done for Russia.

In the year of the Franco-Russian alliance there was an Anglo-French incident of more than usual gravity at Bangkok. The French possessions in Indo-China and Annam were a natural point of departure for an advance on Siam, and in July 1893 a 'pacific blockade' of Bangkok was announced. The British had no intention of allowing the French to set up a new boundary which would be coterminous with the frontier of India, or to lose control of the Siamese trade, so the British naval forces at Bangkok were ordered

to ignore the French request to withdraw and remain for the protection of British subjects in the port. These forces were not alarming: they consisted of the gunboat *Linnet*, at Bangkok itself, and two cruisers at the mouth of the Menam. The presence of the *Linnet*, however, was enough to make the French pensive: their admiral, like his colleague at Alexandria, weighed anchor and departed under urgent orders from the Quai d'Orsay. The game of bluff had collapsed under the threat of war and Siam became a buffer state.

Next year a new Foreign Minister went to the Quai d'Orsay. M. Gabriel Hanotaux was a man of breeding and a professional diplomat: he was also the enemy of Britain and an eager practitioner of that 'policy of pin-pricks' which had brought the neighbours into conflict with each other in so many corners of the globe. He came to power less than three weeks after the Anglo-Congolese Convention, which gave the right bank of the Upper Nile to Britain and the left bank to the Congo Free State, had checked the French hopes of advancing to the Nile by way of the Ubanghi River. In vain did M. Hanotaux fulminate against this treaty; it was signed and even published in the British and Belgian press without any reference to France. To offset the Convention M. Hanotaux and M. Bourgeois, the President of the Council, together with M. Liotard, the commissary of the Upper Ubanghi, planned an expedition from the French Congo to the Nile valley. This trek across Africa would be a great feat of endurance and would prove, by the planting of the *tricolore* on the Upper Nile, that France still claimed a share in the affairs of Egypt.

With deadly and characteristic patience the British had already waited ten years to take vengeance for the capture of Khartoum and the murder of General Gordon, and three years more were to elapse before Sir Herbert Kitchener put the armies of the Khalifa to flight and conquered the Sudan. But in the meantime the British had no intention of permitting French encroachments, however slight, on the valuable Nile territory, and as early as 1895 Sir Edward Grey, using in the House of Commons the strongest language of diplomacy, said any French advance towards that quarter would be regarded as an unfriendly act.

Fully aware that British vested interests in Egypt — chiefly the new railway which began at Wady Halfa, the new Nile reservoir, and the projected dam at Assouan — were the commercial background

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of the Government's political gestures, the French decided to ignore the latter, and in the spring of 1896 a small force under Captain Marchand set out to cross Africa. John Bull's geographical diabetes, as the *Matin* called it, was to be cured by the medicine of French determination; and while waiting for Marchand to reach his objective there was plenty to think about in Paris, where the Dreyfus case was now a congenial source of dispeace.

Captain Dreyfus, in truth, was a topic more attractive to the French than Captain Marchand. When the events of 1898 had unrolled themselves and Marchand had reached Fashoda only to be compelled to withdraw under British pressure, there were no two ways of thinking about him. He was a brave soldier and a faithful commander (as indeed he was) who had been sold by the Government which was sold to perfidious Albion, and there was only one possible way to treat him — to take the horses out of the landau which met him at the Gare de Lyon and draw him through the cheering streets, and to offer him a gala evening at the theatre. Nor was there, from another point of view, a great choice of hostile demonstrations, apart from howling '*Vendu!*' outside the Quai d'Orsay or '*A bas l'Angleterre!*' outside the British Embassy. Unanimity has its disadvantages.

L'affaire Dreyfus, however, provided endless opportunities for dispute. The *Dictée* and the *Bordereau*, Esterhazy and du Paty de Clam, Colonel Picquart and Emile Zola — topics and personalities crowded upon each other, rent society asunder, demoralized the Government and revealed depths of anti-Semitism which had never been suspected in France, where the Jewish community had long been prosperous and respected. The Prince of Wales observed these symptoms closely. Having many Jewish friends, he was curious to see how their co-religionists in France would be affected, for it was evident that, from New York to Bucharest, world Jewry had been shaken by the attack of which Dreyfus was the symbolical victim. He watched, and he concluded that the wave of anti-Semitism was really a wave of anti-German feeling. Dreyfus, who hailed from Mulhouse, might be said to represent the Franco-German Jews of that disputed territory, and it was because he was suspected of complicity with German agents that so much passion had been roused by his trial. That was one argument, and the Prince soon found another — that the Dreyfus case, prolonged and incredibly painful as it was, acted as a safety-valve for the national bad temper. This

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did not mean that the French had no longer any irritation to spare for Britain — on the contrary; but it did mean that the civil strife, the social cleavages of the Dreyfus case awoke responsible people to the realization that France could not go on forever like a dog with hydrophobia. The visit of the Czar and the Czarina in 1896 was a welcome change from the asperities of the Affair and a pleasing reaffirmation of the alliance, but it was not quite enough. France needed more friends, and the sooner she put her house in order the sooner she was likely to get them.

CHAPTER VIII

BRUSSELS, 1900

At the same period very few people in Britain would have ventured to say that their immensely powerful country needed friends or allies. For much more than half a century Britain had been dedicated to a policy of splendid isolation with the single exception of the temporary alliance with France in the Crimean War. A subtle change, however, had come over the nature of this isolation since the boyhood of the Prince of Wales. The time was past when Britain could truthfully claim to be the champion of small nations: it had ended with the failure to protect Denmark against Prussia in 1864. Thenceforth it was by words, not deeds, that Britain championed the oppressed, and the day was not far distant when, by herself going to war with a community of shepherds and farmers, she was to earn the reprobation of the whole of Europe.

When the Prince of Wales was born, Germany and Italy were a loose collection of separate states, France a monarchy, Norway and Sweden united under the House of Bernadotte, Austria dominated, as in the days of Napoleon, by Prince Metternich, and Britain, scarcely free of the system of the Concert of Europe, prepared to join a continental alliance when it seemed to be expedient — as in the Quadruple Alliance against Mehemet Ali. Now France was a Republic for the third time, and there were signs of republican principles in Norway and in the Iberian peninsula; Germany had made herself a powerful empire and Italy a sturdy kingdom, and an entirely new system of alliances, from which Britain was excluded, had been set up in Europe. The *Dreikaisersbund* had been superseded by the Dual Alliance, and the Dual had become the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy, although Italy, the weak link in the chain, had safeguarded the Latin inheritance by an understanding with France, who sought to balance the strength of the Central Powers by her famous alliance with Russia. The progress of science had put Europe into closer contact than ever before with a Power which was as yet scarcely conscious of its own enormous strength. It was

fitting that 1898 should witness a gold rush in Alaska, even greater than the earlier discoveries in Australia and California: it was the coping stone of America's century of self-discovery, and although the last twenty years of the nineteenth century had witnessed Germany's economic triumph in Europe, the dawn of the twentieth brought the United States, in one great self-confident bound, to the forefront of world commerce. Such were some of the changes which time had brought, but to the Londoner, made Empire-conscious by the Harmsworth press, all of them together were less important than his own proud destiny as the citizen of an Empire which had been welded and extended during sixty years of glorious reign.

The ten years between the two Jubilees were not only the apogee of Victoria's sovereignty, they were also a period when Britain reaped the fruits of Empire-building and enjoyed a prosperity untouched by any fears of failure. To most of her subjects it seemed as if the venerable Queen were immortal, or as if the Widow at Windsor (popularized by Mr. Kipling) was a being possessed of supernatural powers, at whose command rebellious monarchs bowed and refractory natives found themselves added, even at the cannon's mouth, to the population of the British Empire. Meantime the Prince of Wales was immortal too: the *garçon éternel* fixed now in the heavy, fleshy tabernacle which gave him such a curious resemblance to Henry VIII: still a little despised by the best society, a little too fond of parvenu financiers and Jews; still the leader of fashion, and now the delightful grandfather not only of the two small Fife girls but also of the fair-haired little boys and their sister who were born to the Duke and Duchess of York.

Mr. Gladstone was in retirement, and in 1898 would follow Mr. Disraeli to the shades; Prince Bismarck, long since cast off by his royal pupil, had been succeeded by the courtly Count von Bülow: everywhere the great men of the nineteenth century were giving place to the new generation of the twentieth. These newcomers were actuated by the very motive which the old Queen 'neither understood nor wished to hear'. Expediency was predestined to be the motto, in society as in politics, of the reign of Edward VII, and the King himself, by character and experience, was well fitted to bear it. Had he succeeded to the throne at an earlier age, greater bodily strength and definite views might have made him an autocratic ruler; as it was the ten years between fifty and sixty which took

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much from his physical resistance, gave him an added suppleness of mind which directed the shaping of his politics.

These ten years, after the vexations of Tranby Croft and Prince Albert Victor's death, did not pass disagreeably. He had to give up some of his pleasures, but others took their place: Cowes, for instance, had lost all its savour since Wilhelm II had taken to yachting with the awful German thoroughness which took the gaiety out of any sport. The Kaiser had a new yacht called the *Meteor*, which to his uncontrolled joy proved faster than his uncle's *Britannia*; after her defeat the Prince would race *Britannia* no more, and the victor, left in possession of the Solent, looked about him for the means to challenge British shipping upon wider seas. While he meditated the expansion of his Navy, the Prince made up for his yacht's defeat by a new victory on the turf, the supreme victory, which his friend Mr. Harry Chaplin had won as far back as 1867 when they were young men together, and when Persimmon won the Derby in 1896 his royal owner was finally fixed in the favour of the crowd. Although he was to win the blue riband on two subsequent occasions, Persimmon's Derby was the victory which gave the Prince the greatest pleasure, and the horse's very considerable winnings during the season were spent on the beautifying of the Sandringham grounds, where improvements were thereafter pointed out to visitors with the chuckling comment, 'All Per-rr-simmon's!'

Six months before this victory he had won another diplomatic success, which received more praise than perhaps it deserved. There was a certain tendency now to flatter the Prince of Wales (after all, his accession could not be so very long delayed), and just as he had been too little esteemed when he was young, so the small successes which were all he had scope for were over-esteemed in his middle age. And those who praised him did so with a mild surprise, such as men feel when a captive gorilla successfully imitates the gestures of humanity, for the statesmen of the Diamond Jubilee had lost some of the reverence for monarchy which had been shown by Lord Beaconsfield or even, in a more ponderous constitutional way, by Mr. Gladstone. It was not a return to the Whiggism of a Palmerston: it was the accident that the modern statesmen were clever in a new way, either intellectually, like Mr. Arthur Balfour who was one of the leaders of an esoteric company called 'The Souls' and Mr. Haldane, a philosophical scholar of standing, or else smart in

an *arriviste* way, new to British politics, like Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Mr. Lloyd George. Both types rather looked down upon the Prince of Wales who was neither intellectual nor 'smart' in that sense of the word, and whom Mr. Balfour at least regarded as merely a necessary evil.

His principal success in 1895 was the dispatch of the 'Venezuela telegram' in which students of politics pretended to find a parallel with his father's handling of the 'Trent' case just before his death, which averted the danger of war between Britain and the United States. President Grover Cleveland had suddenly taken up a very truculent attitude on the delimiting of the Venezuelan boundary; standing fast upon the Monroe doctrine, he announced that any interference by British interests would be repelled by force. At this juncture the Prince dispatched a message which appeared in the New York press, and which expressed the hope that the difficulty would be amicably settled, as it forthwith was. On such slight endeavours may a man build the reputation of a Peacemaker.

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, now Colonial Secretary, had a particular reason for rejoicing at the end of tension between the United States and Great Britain. He was revolving in his mind a plan for a new triple alliance, of a kind never before conceived by any British statesman, for it was designed to include those United States which more than a hundred years before had fought themselves free of British rule and which for nearly as long had viewed all European affairs in the light of the Monroe doctrine. The other party in the new alliance was to be Germany, for Mr. Chamberlain saw with perfect clearness that Germany stood at the crossroads, and in the new century would go on either with Britain or against her. If the Kaiser were sincere in his many protestations of affection for Britain, it might be possible to come to an arrangement.

Mr. Chamberlain allowed his schemes to simmer until the Diamond Jubilee was over, nor were the Jubilee celebrations exactly calculated to attract new allies to Britain. For the Jubilee of 1897 was frankly, even blatantly, a feast of Empire, and advertised the power and self-sufficiency of Britain to the world. European potentates were not invited to the Diamond Jubilee, as they had been to that of 1887, unless they were members of the Queen's family circle, for on this occasion the imperial matriarch belonged only to her people, as they to her. Such was the theme of the Jubilee hymn,

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composed by Bishop Walsham How and sung throughout the kingdom in her honour:

‘O Royal heart, with wide embrace
For all her children yearning.
O happy realm, such mother grace
With loyal love returning.
Where England’s flag flies wide unfurled
All tyrant wrongs repelling,
God make the world a better world
For man’s brief earthly dwelling.’

This blend of sentimentality and self-assurance was better suited to the public mood than the more sumptuous strains of the ‘Recessional’. For the bard of Empire had sung for once in a curiously minor key,

‘Judge of the nations, spare us yet
Lest we forget — lest we forget!’

It was hardly what one expected from Mr. Kipling. Forget *what?* the nation wanted to know. Forget Trafalgar and Waterloo, the Lady with the Lamp, the Residency at Lucknow, the march to Kandahar, and all the other glorious chapters in the tale of conquest and of empire? That was not likely, but was that what Mr. Kipling meant? One thing was certain, that the heart of Britain, in spite of his poetical adjurations, was never less humble and contrite than in the radiant summer of 1897. There was the Queen — God bless her! who had promised to be good and who had been good; and there was Teddy, the sly old dog, who had, perhaps wisely, never promised any such thing: the Queen and Teddy, domestic virtue and the Derby winner, were complementary essentials to the British temperament. But in spite of that, Bishop How’s hymn was one of the last songs of the nineteenth century — piety, conquest and liberalism — and in the solemn bourdon of the ‘Recessional’ there was already a hint of ‘Tipperary’.

Within a year from the Diamond Jubilee Britain was in serious disagreement with two great Powers, and within two she had embarked on a war with the South African Republic which revealed to interested observers the hollowness of that military power on which so much of her greatness had been based. With France the situation in 1898 was desperate indeed. Kitchener had defeated the

force of the Khalifa at Omdurman, and the Union Jack was flying again at Khartoum when, as the Sirdar pressed on up the Nile, he was electrified to see another flag flying above the fort and the mud huts which were dignified by the name of Fashoda. Captain Marchand had reached his goal, and it was the *tricolore* which was flying on the Upper Nile.

When the news of this encounter reached the outside world, pride and anxiety were felt in France and simple annoyance in Britain. Lord Salisbury absolutely refused to admit that the French had any right to be in the Nile territory and insisted that Marchand be ordered to retire. If M. Hanotaux had still been at the Quai d'Orsay it is possible that a declaration of war might have been the result. Certainly the French were ready for it, and the mayors of the Channel ports began to prepare their towns for bombardment or invasion, while across the Straits of Dover, English authorities took similar precautions. But the new Foreign Minister of France, M. Delcassé, was a man with a fixed idea. There had been nobody quite like him since Gambetta, for his idea was the *entente cordiale*, and he did not propose to jettison it at the outset of his career for the sake of Fashoda plus the national susceptibility. He ordered Marchand to withdraw, and the British were left in undisputed command of the Nile Valley.

At the other side of the world Britain was giving another demonstration of her power. This was in Samoa, where the Germans hoped to secure for themselves the control they had shared with Britain and the United States, and to that end supported a pretender, Mataafa, when the native throne fell vacant. The shells of British and American gunboats soon disposed of Mataafa's claims, the late king's son Matieboa Tanu ascended his father's throne, and Germany was no better off than before. The Prince of Wales took a strong line over this affair, and when the Kaiser paid his next visit to England the Prince insisted that one of his suite, Admiral von Senden, should write to Sir Frank Lascelles, the British Ambassador in Berlin, a letter of apology for expressions used by him at the time of the Samoa affair, before he could be received in Britain. This was indeed a change from the situation in Vienna ten years before.

But if the British were able to dominate the scene at Fashoda and in Samoa in 1898, the scene was changed within a twelvemonth, when the defiance which neither France nor Germany had dared

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to utter was hurled at the great Empire by an old-fashioned Boer named Paul Kruger. The discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand had led to a great influx of prospectors and adventurers into the Boer territory, who refused to obey the scriptural laws of the community, and when in the ensuing quarrels the Boers denied that they were subject to British suzerainty, the Colonial Secretary urged that they must be taught a lesson. War broke out in October 1899.

The moment was not auspicious for Mr. Chamberlain's other policy, the new triple alliance. The Kaiser combined an indiscreet flow of sympathy for President Kruger with some unsought advice to his grandmother on how to win the war, and Mr. Chamberlain, by choosing November 1899 for the date of unfolding his plans for an alliance both to the Kaiser and to the British public, certainly gave the impression that it was because Britain was in difficulties that she was looking for a friend. His *démarche* was quite unprofitable, for the German Chancellor announced in the Reichstag that such an alliance could not be accepted, and the Americans, as might have been expected, refused to be drawn into European affairs. This was the situation when, to the undisguised joy of her envious neighbours, the closing days of 1899 brought the series of defeats at Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso which made 'Black Week' the shame of an incredulous Britain.

The Prince of Wales now perceived that keeping on Poor Uncle George as Commander-in-Chief had not been without its drawbacks. The army which went to the Cape was to all intents and purposes the army which had gone to Scutari, only this time there was no Miss Nightingale to organize the hospitals which presently were full of enteric cases. The truth of what the Queen had written to Disraeli during the Zulu wars was proved up to the hilt, not for the first time, and by no means for the last. 'The true economy will be to be always ready.' That was what she had said in 1879, but now, twenty years later, she wasted no time in reproaches. Her superb courage rose to the occasion, and when Mr. Balfour went to condole with her on the miseries of Black Week, she was ready to flare out, 'Please understand that there is no one depressed in this house! We are not interested in the possibilities of defeat, they do not exist!'

She had need of all her courage, which was soon to be tried by a series of agitating personal events. In the spring of 1900 she decided to cancel her usual visit to the South of France and proceed instead

to Ireland, as a compliment to the Irish soldiers who were fighting bravely in South Africa. It was many years since she had visited Dublin, and in that tenacious memory the shortcomings of the Irish were still clearly written, but in the mild spring weather she crossed the Irish Channel and in the middle of surprisingly enthusiastic demonstrations she received some startling news.

There had been an attempt on the life of the Prince of Wales. It was the first time that such a thing had happened, although his mother had been exposed to similar danger on several occasions, like most of the crowned heads in Europe. Her assailants had usually been insane, but there had been a political frenzy behind the hands which struck down the Czar Alexander II and the Empress Elizabeth of Austria. Louis Philippe had been quite a connoisseur of political *attentats*, and Napoleon III had nearly lost his life by the hand of Orsini. The would-be murderer of the Prince of Wales was also an Italian, a fifteen-year-old boy named Sipido, and the attempt took place at Brussels.

The Prince and Princess of Wales were passing through Belgium on their way to Denmark, and were installed in their railway carriage when Sipido appeared at the window and fired a shot which went between them and embedded itself in the woodwork. The Prince and his wife behaved with great courage, and assured the frantic Belgian officials that they were unhurt — 'Anarchists are bad shots', said the Prince of Wales, but it presently became apparent that anarchists were rather clever.

For young Sipido asserted that he had made his attempt out of sympathy with the Boers, a reason which secured him the tacit approval of most of Europe. The Prince realized with annoyance that the youth would be tried in Brussels, where the atmosphere was not exactly sympathetic to Britain, for besides the bad impression created by the Boer War there had been a good deal of friction with Belgium over the Congo Free State. His own relations with Leopold II had been impaired for some time, although they had once been boon companions, for 'Congo Leopold's' reputation both personally and in regard to Africa was decidedly too fly-blown for a gentleman who required his intimates to present at least a convincing façade to the public. The latest cause of irritation between the cousins was Leopold's treatment of his daughter Stephanie, who had spent some unhappy years since her husband, the Archduke Rudolf,

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committed suicide with Marie Vetsera, and who in 1900 had consoled herself by marrying the Hungarian Prince Lonyay, which her father considered to be a *mésalliance*. With these feelings in Belgium it was perhaps not surprising that the Brussels jury found Sipido's youth an excuse for not proceeding to stern measures, and the boy, given an opportunity to escape, lost no time in hurrying across the French frontier.

The Prince of Wales was by now extremely indignant. The boy's words had branded him as 'an accomplice of Chamberlain' — an invidious distinction for the heir to the throne — and though the Parliaments of some friendly small nations, notably Portugal and Greece, had sent official congratulations on his escape, the British Parliament had sent no message at all. Long accustomed to unpopularity at home, he did not welcome it abroad, and was already smarting under the impossibility of going to Paris for the opening of the great Exhibition of 1900. Ever since Fashoda the French press had attacked Britain and the royal family with unexampled virulence, and the insults addressed not only to himself but to his mother prevented him from paying an official visit to Paris, where there was the danger of a hostile demonstration against his uniform, if not against himself. The only voice which was raised strongly in his favour during the Sipido affair was the not particularly welcome one of his nephew Wilhelm, who castigated the Belgians with his accustomed vigour — 'Either', he said, 'their laws are ridiculous or the jury are a set of d——d, b——y scoundrels.'

But the Kaiser underestimated the Belgians. The summer had passed, and young Sipido was still at large in Paris, when Europe was electrified by the spectacle of a King turned detective as Leopold II left Laeken to track down the fugitive. His movements were shrouded in mystery lest, as he said himself, Sipido should take fright and escape to America. The royal bloodhound explored the purlieus of Paris (of which he had an extensive knowledge) with so much vigour that the French police, goaded into action by amateur competition, at length effected an arrest and an extradition, and Sipido, committed to prison, beguiled his extensive leisure by the composition of appeals to the Prince of Wales.

The South African War dragged on and the Queen, who had always been intensely proud of her soldiers, rallied her failing strength for the reviews, the decoration of the wounded, the reception

of generals and for the long hours of writing which it involved. She had two widowed daughters beside her: Princess Christian and Princess Henry of Battenberg (who had been Princess Beatrice), and when she could no longer write herself she dictated to them. They grew tired, and Ladies-in-Waiting took their places, but still the work went on. The Prince of Wales watched from a distance, as he had done for forty years; now and again she leant on him for a moment of weakness, but the iron will which had carried her so far soon resumed command. Her eldest daughter lay dying in Germany of the same terrible disease which had felled the Emperor Frederick: and news had come from Coburg that the Duke, Queen Victoria's second son, who had succeeded to his Uncle Ernest's title, was suffering from the same dread affection of the throat. Soon the message came that he was dead. 'My poor darling Affie gone too! It is hard at eighty-one!' wrote the weary hand which had recorded so many deaths. Her world was slipping away now, children and grandchildren had gone to the grave before her, and she was soon to follow them. One more fourteenth of December was to bring back still poignant memories of the great sorrow of her life, and then as the steel-cold January of 1901 ushered in the twentieth century, the Queen sank peacefully to her rest. There was time to summon all her surviving children, and one of her grandchildren came who had not been summoned, the Kaiser hastening from Berlin to Osborne to obtrude his flamboyant personality into the silent room where an Age lay dying. The Prince of Wales had been kept in the background. As on the day of his father's death at Windsor, it was thought that the sight of him would alarm the patient, since he who would be King to-morrow was still the Bertie for whose disturbing presence people had to be quietly prepared, but he went to his mother's side without asking leave when he heard that she had said, with touching formality, 'The Prince of Wales will be sorry to hear how ill I am. Do you think he ought to be told?'

Much later, as her children knelt or stood around her, she said restlessly, 'I don't want to die yet. There are several things I want to arrange'. Forty years earlier she had longed for death; but when the hour was upon her she clung to life. There were still things to be arranged, but she realized helplessly that it would be left to the stout, aging man on one side of the bed and the mustachioed figure

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with the disguised arm who stood upon the other, to try to arrange them.

As soon as the Queen had expired, Wilhelm begun the career of officiousness which was to make him, as the French Ambassador in Berlin said, the lion of the obsequies. When her children had left the room in tears he remained, and, refusing to let the undertakers touch the Queen's body, himself measured it for the coffin. When the time came to raise the dead Queen from her bed, it was his hands, and her eldest son's, which laid her in her coffin. Wherever the bereaved family turned, there was Wilhelm, ready with some apposite phrase about his dear Grandmama, until, worn out by his insistence, they stole away to their apartments and left him master of the field. He had sustained, with far greater success, the role he had rehearsed at Uncle Bertie's wedding: he had stolen the limelight from the principal characters in the drama.

From all but one. For a few days longer the Queen still dominated the imagination of her subjects. The gun-carriage was being prepared which should draw the Queen of Victories on the last journey through her capital, and down at Frogmore the mausoleum had been opened to reveal the coffin of the Prince Consort, on which lay the sword he had never drawn in anger. The coffin at Osborne was covered by the Queen's robes of state, on which the miniver was already yellow with age, and faintly yellow too was the bridal veil which was drawn across her face. Thus appalled as bride and sovereign, the old Queen was laid again beside the husband of her youth.

Two long lines of warships guarded the Solent as the royal yacht *Alberta* set sail for the mainland with the coffin on deck and the flag at half-mast. Immediately behind came the *Victoria and Albert* with the chief mourner who, nearly sixty years before, had sailed on the old yacht into Falmouth and Aberdeen and Cork on the first of his many journeys as Prince of Wales. That title was his no longer, and looking up, he perceived that the flag above his head was also at half-mast. He sent to the captain to ask the reason. 'The Queen is dead, Sir', came the reply. 'The King of England lives!' he answered, and as they sailed on to the mainland the flag of England climbed slowly to the masthead.

PART THREE

THE KING

I survive
To mock the expectation of the world,
To frustrate prophecies, and to raze out
Rotten opinions, who hath writ me down
After my seeming. The tide of blood in me
Hath proudly flowed in vanity till now:
Now doth it turn, and ebb back to the sea,
Where it shall mingle with the state of floods
And flow henceforth in formal majesty.

SHAKESPEARE: *Henry IV*

CHAPTER I

WESTMINSTER ABBEY, 1902

BEFORE the funeral of the Queen took place her successor had to make his first appearance as sovereign at the meeting of the Privy Council, for which he returned to London on January 23rd. It was from the meetings of this body that his mother had long striven to exclude him, and at which he had never actually presided in her place until 1898 when the Council had to be summoned during her absence on the Riviera to promulgate Britain's declaration of neutrality in the Spanish-American War. The new King, an elderly gentleman among elderly gentlemen, struck no such note of touching novelty as had been struck by the young Victoria when she first confronted her Privy Councillors on a June morning of 1837, but he did strike one note of unconventionality when it was discovered that his brief address had been delivered extempore. This emerged when he was respectfully asked for his non-existent manuscript, and with a little tax on his own and other memories it was possible to reconstruct the speech for the records. Everybody had retained one passage very clearly: that which announced his future style.

'I have resolved', he said, 'to be known by the name of Edward, which has been borne by six of my ancestors. In doing so I do not undervalue the name of Albert, which I inherit from my ever lamented, great and wise father, who by universal consent is, I think deservedly, known by the name of Albert the Good, and I desire that his name should stand alone.'

These were impeccable filial sentiments, but while paying lip service to one parent the King blandly over-rode the wishes so often expressed by the other — never more clearly than at the time of his own eldest son's birth. Then the Queen had written, 'It was beloved Papa's wish as well as mine, that you should be called by *both* [names] when you became King, and it would be *impossible* for you to *drop* your Father's. It would be monstrous.' But monstrous or not, it was done, and the new monarch was duly proclaimed as King Edward VII. His Ministers thought they understood why he wished to abandon the name of the father who had been in some measure

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his tyrant, and sighed a little while they admitted it was natural. Their august mistress still lay unburied at Osborne, and already wishes so near to her heart were publicly disregarded! It was what they had always feared: that the accession of the Prince of Wales would mean the end of all the old ways. The mystic power with which the withdrawn and autocratic Queen had surrounded herself would all be dissipated by the advent of a King whose failings were so widely rumoured, the details of whose life were so well known. And yet — would it be so? The Privy Councillors heard in due course of his reply to the captain of the *Victoria and Albert* and were secretly impressed. 'The King of England lives!' What did that imply? A strict sense of the protocol surrounding a demise of the Crown, deriving from the constitutionalism of the Prince Consort, or a sense of personal authority, deriving from the Queen?

They were not long left in doubt. The new King proved to put a very wide interpretation upon royal privilege and to be extremely tenacious of all the rights of the Crown. Although it is the common and loose practice to refer to the concluding domestic drama of his reign — the struggle for House of Lords reform and the consequent threat to usurp the sovereign's right of creating peers — as the chief, if not the only, constitutional crisis occurring between the King and the representatives of the People, there were in reality many other crises, less public but none the less deep, which revealed the inherent autocracy of Edward VII. Thanks to Lytton Strachey, it is generally appreciated that the early death of the Prince Consort was of extreme constitutional significance, since it deprived the Queen of an influence whose permanency while her husband lived could never be challenged by any transient holder of office and which invariably worked to extend the scope and authority of her rule. It is not so clearly appreciated that another accident prevented the successful resumption by Edward VII of the tactics to which his father was intellectually, and his mother naturally, inclined; which was, that King Edward was in his sixtieth year when he began to reign. Physically he was past his prime, and mentally he was discouraged by many years of idle waiting. He had no longer the stamina or the sustained ingenuity necessary for a prolonged struggle with his Ministers. That such a struggle might be necessary was not recognized in the Britain of 1901. Since the Jubilee of 1887 the popularity of the Queen had steadily grown into a reverent awe which, it was

supposed, Ministers shared with the nursery-governesses of Bayswater; but although in one way the very remoteness of the Queen had developed this mystic loyalty, in another it had widened a gap between Crown and Cabinet of which the new style of Minister was not slow to take advantage.

For some time after the Queen's withdrawal into the fastness of her bereavement it was not fully grasped by her advisors how important a part the Consort had played in politics. Lord Palmerston, who had had many a stirring encounter with the Crown, continued to write as fully to the Queen after the Consort's death as before it, failing to realize that his chief antagonist was no more. Presently the very able men who served her understood that the intellectual subtlety which had inspired the edicts of Windsor had vanished with the Prince. There were, and always would be, certain subjects, vast and fiery subjects like the prestige of her country, which would kindle the Queen's passion, but it was possible, little by little, to curtail her authorities and her interferences as they could never have been curtailed in her husband's life-time. And this process was going on, paradoxically enough, at the very time when her power seemed greatest, for it did not begin till the statesmen of her youth and middle age had passed from the scene. Lord Melbourne, Lord John Russell and Mr. Gladstone had honoured the Crown because of the constitution which permitted it to exist, and in venerating the symbol of monarchy they were really venerating the handiwork of the Whigs their predecessors and the Revolution of 1688. But the statesmen of her declining years, men like Salisbury, Rosebery, Lansdowne, Chamberlain, Hicks-Beach and Balfour, most of whom were in office when her son succeeded, had not so exalted a conception of the monarchy. The two Cecils, who were the Marquess of Salisbury and his nephew Arthur Balfour, were impelled by the long traditions of their family to support oligarchy rather than monarchy; Joseph Chamberlain, on the other hand, while he had abandoned the Republicanism of his youth, was compelled by the briefer traditions of Birmingham to support democracy. The voice of still younger politicians was heard as Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill began to practise their fledgling songs and it was already clear that the former, at least, was not likely to be a future supporter of Crown privilege. Nor was this all, for faint rumours were audible of a movement which middle-class Britain compla-

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cently supposed to have been stifled in 1848. It had been called Chartism then, it was called Labour now, but whatever its temporary name it was a movement generally suspected, as Sir Leicester Dedlock would have said, of being something in the Wat Tyler way. To reconcile these elements and emerge more powerful than them all was a task which might have tried the skill and endurance of a man of forty who had already served twenty years of close apprenticeship to the career of kingship: it was beyond Edward VII at sixty, with forty frustrated years behind him.

Those who deplore the fact that Queen Victoria did not abdicate on her husband's death, as she then spoke of doing; or either by death or abdication hand over her task to her son at least ten years earlier than 1901, show a certain lack of gratitude for the reign of that remarkable woman, during which the power and prestige of Britain attained their apogee. She exercised a zealous care for the armed strength of her country which would have been extremely valuable had it been repeated in the period following the Great War, and had a better conception than her heir or any of her Ministers of the best way to deal with the leaders of Germany. Admittedly she adhered too long to her husband's pro-Prussian policy. If Edward VII had succeeded in 1863 he might have prevailed upon his Cabinet to intervene in the Schleswig-Holstein question and on behalf of Denmark to strike a first and conclusive blow at the aspirations of Bismarck, which would have been salutary for other countries as well as Prussia. If he had succeeded by 1870 he might equally have prevailed upon the Cabinet to intervene in the Franco-Prussian War, on behalf, of course, of his friends the French: which would probably have resulted in a situation not unlike that of 1940, for Bismarck's lightning-war tactics would still have smashed the French before British support could be organized and dispatched to them. If he had been King by 1890 the French 'policy of pin-pricks' would have been modified and finally eliminated by tactful handling and the episode of Fashoda, which still rankled forty years later, would never have taken place. The chief policy affected by his earlier accession would have been the Entente Cordiale; but diplomacy alone could not have halted the rise of Germany, which was the chief factor in the development of his mother's later policy and of his own; and with that rise, particularly as expressed by the pretensions of her grandson, the Queen showed

herself, up to the very end of her life, as more than able to cope. Although failing health and eyesight, and the consequent need for seclusion, removed the Queen from her Ministers to an increasing extent, no taint of senility ever weakened her keen ability, and King Edward in succeeding her followed not a feeble old woman, for whom as for her country death was a merciful release, but a ruler who was strong, resolute and intelligent to the last.

The importance of his being past the prime of life at his accession, therefore, does not centre on the diplomatic achievements which might earlier have been his, but on the inability of an elderly man to assert his will against his Ministers and the consequent onward march of that mysterious organism, the British constitution.

Shortly after the funeral of his mother, another distressing experience befell the King. The news of his elder sister's health was increasingly serious, and he felt that if he did not immediately go to Germany he might see her no more in this life. On February 23rd he left England, and after a trying journey across Holland, where the population turned out at Flushing and other stations to greet him with *De Volksved*, the Boer national anthem, he reached the Friedrichshof at Cronberg where the Empress Frederick lay dying. Fortune had indeed reversed their situations. The brilliant Vicky, neglected and suffering, was estranged from her son and from the nation her husband might have ruled, while Bertie, for so long considered to be her inferior, had just succeeded to his great inheritance. From his kindly heart all traces of animosity created by the political differences of their younger days had long since died away. He knew all that his sister had endured, and loved his nephew none the more for it, nor was he soothed by the extravagant military displays by which Wilhelm II marked his mother's funeral some months later.

The deaths of the Queen and of the Empress Frederick naturally made 1901 a year of court mourning, and the prolongation of the Boer War did not add to the national gaiety. For some time it was impossible for the general public to tell what sort of King Edward VII might become. Those nearest to him appreciated the many changes which were taking place, not only in the rooms of the royal residences, but in their organization, and in the ceremonials and presentation of the monarchy; they also sensed that the King was taking stock of himself and deciding what he could, as well as

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what he should do. He had always known his intellectual limitations and his personal charm, and to bridge the gap between the two he had cultivated his excellent memory and other natural qualities. He had a far greater knowledge of other rulers and their ministers than any previous sovereign of Britain, thanks to his extensive travels, and in turn was known in most of his own dominions. A man of the world had succeeded a woman who had never made any claim to fashion, but those who thought that his court would be the court of a *viveur*, like the Whitehall of Charles II, were doomed to disappointment. For the King had one asset which he had retained through his 'Guelpho the Gay' period: immense personal dignity, at once the result and the inspiration of the eleventh commandment of the Marlborough House set and the whole of Edwardian society; and that commandment was, 'Thou shalt not be found out'. He himself had been 'found out' and even taken to task for it in the Law Courts on more than one occasion, but then he had never admitted anything. The masochistic impulse to confession was seldom found in Edwardian England, where *noblesse oblige* had been expanded into, Noble birth obliges one to keep one's transgressions secret. Society had moved on from the mid-Victorian belief that ladies must forgive their husband's trespasses without proclaiming them to the world, and had borrowed from France the theory that ladies also may trespass, provided they are discreet and betray nothing. So private morals were naturally relaxed, while public morals were insensibly affected by the King's Gallic preference for the grey world of expediency instead of Queen Victoria's black-and-white world of wrong and right. 'Thou shalt not be found out' was carried into politics where the King frequently showed himself averse from any public inquiry which might reveal mistakes made by authority. If that was an autocratic attitude, it was shared by Joseph Chamberlain, who, it was said, had once observed to a friend that he had made a mistake in going to war with the South African Republic. The friend asked rather drily if he proposed to admit as much in public, to which Chamberlain in honest surprise replied that that would never do. Similarly, the King refused to sanction a Royal Commission into the mistakes of the campaign in South Africa, numerous though these mistakes had been, and later on refused to permit an inquiry on 'ragging' in the Scots Guards; being actuated in the great matter as in the small by the belief that it does no good

to wash dirty linen in public — a hackneyed phrase which appears again and again in his letters when such subjects were raised.

If one admits nothing one is at least able to keep up appearances, and the façade of Edward's dignity was unimpaired. Very soon it was apparent that the façade was even to be embellished, by an insistence on all the trappings of royal grandeur which had somewhat fallen into disuse. Behind the seclusion of his mourning he was extremely active in planning the renovation of his new residences, for besides Marlborough House (which he gave up) and Sandringham, he had Balmoral Castle, Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace, appanages of sovereignty, and Osborne, which his mother had bequeathed to him. The bequest was more of an embarrassment than a pleasure. He had never shared the Queen's enthusiasm for Osborne — and the place was full of painful early memories. He decided abruptly to give it up, and to turn half of it into a school for naval cadets and the other half into a hospital for naval officers who, requiring a long convalescence after tropical diseases or other maladies, were unable to afford the fees of civilian nursing homes. This decision immediately caused dispeace in the royal family. Fate, which had deprived him of the two sisters he sincerely loved, had left him with three others: Princess Louise Duchess of Argyll and Princess Christian, who had lived near their mother, and Princess Henry of Battenberg, who had always made her home with the Queen. All three were sentimental about Osborne and argued tearfully with their brother when they learned of his plans. He lost his temper with them more than once, for a tendency to irascibility was growing on him, and he had never forgotten the influence these sisters had wielded while he had none. Their objections were brushed aside and Osborne was prepared for its new purposes. Only the suite which Queen Victoria had occupied was kept, by the King's direction, as a sort of shrine to her memory.

With the other dwellings, relics and souvenirs left by his mother the new King was less reverent. Buckingham Palace had been disused for many years, except for occasional drawing-rooms: the King himself called it 'the sepulchre'. One or two distinguished visitors had been lodged there, and at least one of the salons had suffered during the visit of the Shah of Persia in 1873, who had ordered a sheep from the palace flock to be sacrificed on the carpet.

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If the King's birthplace had become a sepulchre, Windsor Castle was a museum, containing the gifts and tokens amassed during eighty-odd years by a woman who had never thrown anything away. Piles of albums, family photographs, hideous bric-à-brac of the period were ruthlessly scrapped by the new owner, but it was significant that he had collections of his own to put in their place. It was a symbol that the reign of Edward VII was to be a continuation of Victoria's, or a bridge between it and the world of the Great War. It was not for him to make a clean sweep of his palaces and substitute for Victorian clutter the simple lines of twentieth-century taste. He cleared out the bronze statuettes, the granite paper-weights and the fifty views of Coburg and Rosenau, but only to substitute his own gold keys, silver trowels, and photographs of *Britannia* and Persimmon.

The Munshi and the Queen's other Indian attendants were courteously dismissed, and it was noticed that the King took a peculiar pleasure in destroying the various tablets, statues and urns which lamented the death of Mr. John Brown. But the most revolutionary change of all was seen in the choice of his private apartments at Windsor. With the whole castle, including the Queen's suite, at his disposal, he decided to instal himself in his father's rooms and to sleep in the chamber which every night for forty years had been prepared for a dead man. The medicine bottle and spoon which had stood beside the bed, the portrait fixed above the pillow, the hotwater jug piously replenished — all disappeared, and in the room steeped in the atmosphere of death was now to be detected the aroma of a good cigar.

Experts in period who were also courtiers, like Sir Lionel Cust and Lord Esher, were called upon to sort out the valuable possessions from the worthless, and before long a new lustre had been added to the royal dwellings by the rearrangement of forgotten treasures as well as by fresh paper and paint. The Prince Consort had hung the pictures of Rembrandt and Van Dyck high on the walls of Windsor that the family groups by Winterhalter might be better seen, but now Winterhalter and von Angeli, the admired of Victoria's reign, were 'skied' in their turn and the Old Masters took pride of place. Such was the wish of the King, who took the keenest interest in all the changes, and who was wont to observe to Cust, 'I do not know much about Arrrt, but I think I know something about arr-rrangement!'

At certain points, however, his zeal for change stopped short, so that when the Empress Eugénie visited Windsor and was shown the suite she had occupied half a century before, she was heard to murmur, '*Toujours ces affreux rideaux!*'

As for Queen Alexandra, she was reported to be 'in tearing spirits' and as eager as her husband about the decoration of their new homes. At fifty-seven she was amazingly beautiful, with the graceful figure of a girl, and when the court mourning was over she let her taste for dress run riot. About her toilette for the Coronation she wrote imperiously to the Comptroller of the Household, 'I know better than all the milliners and antiquaries. I shall wear exactly what I like and so shall all my ladies'. There was no mother-in-law now, to criticize her curls or point out with truth that a white dress was not suitable wear for going down a coal mine, and if any member of the Household should fall, as the Comptroller was rather apt to fall, into the error of supposing that one could take liberties with or offer unsought advice to the former leaders of the Marlborough House set, he or she was speedily disabused. The King exacted the utmost tributes of honour and respect for his consort, and himself created her a Lady of the Garter, an exceptional distinction which had its humorous side when the King ordered new royal standards for their Garter stalls. The ladies of the Royal School of Needlework, to whom this task was entrusted, balked at embroidering the naked female figure on the Irish harp, and substituted a plain stringed harp, which caused the King to be overwhelmed with inquiries as to whether and why he proposed to change the royal standard, and diatribes from those who saw in the incident yet another injustice to Ireland. Finally the embroideresses were compelled to conquer their false modesty.

Everything had to be new — that was, as far as possible, the theme of the King's plans. Preparations for his Coronation in June 1902 went forward on a sumptuous scale, and the appointed day was near at hand when, to the general consternation, the King became seriously ill. Sir Frederick Treves diagnosed appendicitis, a complaint which soon became fashionable among as many loyal subjects as could afford it, and performed a successful operation from which the King soon recovered. His friends were pleased to see that he looked much better and younger after his convalescence, having indeed lost eight inches round his waist and two stones in weight;

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but he had also lost some of his strength and resistance in the ordeal, though this was not immediately apparent. Following on a restorative cruise in western waters, he was ready for the Coronation ceremony in August. Most of the royal guests who had assembled for the event in June had been obliged to go home, but their presence was scarcely missed in the joyful acclamations of his own people, and at long last he entered Westminster Abbey in state, to be invested with crown, orb and sceptre and to be presented to his subjects, by the grace of God, as 'the undoubted King of this realm'.

CHAPTER II

PARIS, 1903

SHORTLY after Edward VII became King, and while he was still living at Marlborough House, Lord Redesdale visited him one evening and they conversed till after midnight. As the guest rose to go, the King prepared to instal himself before 'a huge pile of the familiar red boxes'. When Lord Redesdale suggested that he should not work so late, he insisted that he must do so, and added with a smile, 'Besides, it is all so interesting!'

The anecdote is reminiscent of his mother in the days when she rejoiced in having 'immensely to do' and wrote in her journal within a week of her accession, 'I have seen almost all my other Ministers, and do regular, hard, but to me *delightful* work with them.' The same enthusiasm possessed them both, and in the case of Edward VII it was intensified by the long time he had had to wait before those self-same red boxes were delivered as of right to him; it was an enthusiasm which was sufficient to lift him above the difficulties of the first half of his reign until, in the second half, his own body began to fail him.

Punctual almost to mania in his habits, and upset for an entire day if any one, by being slightly late for an appointment, threw his programme out of order, he soon planned a routine for his days and years from which he seldom swerved. At seven a.m. he drank a glass of milk, and after work at his red boxes and a close perusal of the newspapers, by now almost his only reading matter, he took his breakfast, including at least three hot dishes, at ten. Lunch was hearty, and he liked to eat both lamb and chicken in some form at that meal; then there was tea — he liked a good tea; and at a quarter past eight he sat down with appetite to a dinner of five or six courses, with hock, champagne and brandy. It was told of him that once at Biarritz he ate his way through a superabundant dinner, finishing up with a dessert of every conceivable fruit and sweetmeat, and then, looking about him, said wistfully, 'Is there no cheese?' It was no wonder that he had to make an annual cure, and since 1899 he

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had deserted Homburg for Marienbad where he was the centre of attraction for every one from pretty Fräulein Pistl who sold Styrian hats under the colonnades, to the latest Balkan Premier, lurking about in the hope of a word with royalty. After dinner he played bridge. Sometimes the Queen had her bridge-table too, but his was always set up, and when he dined out privately he often stipulated that it should be in a company of four or eight, so that they could play bridge, always provided the guests chosen did not play too well. He disliked the expert who held 'post mortems' on the hands; it bored him, and very soon the King's boredom grew to be as real to his court as the Little Black Dog is real to nursery circles. It could be almost a visible presence, and then every one hastened to dispel it; if some of the courtiers remembered that his mother had never permitted herself to be bored, they also remembered, if they were honest, that she had wept instead.

The royal year was as clearly divided as the royal day. Every January he spent a week at Chatsworth as the guest of the Duke of Devonshire, returning to town at the beginning of February for the State opening of Parliament. In March he went to France, paying a visit to Biarritz, or cruising in the Mediterranean between two sojourns in Paris. In April he went to Copenhagen for his father-in-law's birthday; May and June were sacred to the London season, with the ritual of the Royal Academy, Covent Garden, Epsom and Ascot; in July he stayed with the Duke of Richmond for the Goodwood meeting, and after Cowes went on to Bolton Abbey where he was again the guest of the Duke of Devonshire for the Twelfth of August: he never left for Marienbad in September till he had seen the St. Leger, and after his cure he paid a series of continental visits, returning to spend October at Balmoral. November and December were passed between Buckingham Palace and Windsor, but he was always at Sandringham for the Christmas holidays. Such was the skeleton of his year, but in between the bare bones came other engagements and duties, and in a year which reads like a record of pleasure there was included a formidable amount of work. His Ministers were at first exercised by his frequent absences from Britain, so unlike the practice of Queen Victoria, and asked if he desired to name a substitute for Privy Council meetings: they were quickly told that he would never be so far away from London that he could not return on the shortest notice, and that he had no inten-

tion of putting any one else in his place. He had waited long enough for the privilege of presiding over the Privy Council.

This was an early proof of his insistence on his own rights, but there had already been a definite clash between himself and his Ministers. In February 1901 he performed his first State opening of Parliament with a splendour hardly diminished by court mourning. This was a royal ceremonial which had fallen into desuetude, having been performed by Queen Victoria only seven times between 1861 and 1886 and never at all since then. On this occasion, of course, the new King had to take the constitutional oaths on his accession, and a situation arose beforehand when it was discovered that he had a strong objection to the terms in which he had to proclaim his Protestant faith. When the oath was drawn up it had been thought necessary for the sovereign to denounce Catholicism from mass to mariolatry in unmistakable language, and these words, blithely pronounced by Victoria even after the removal of Catholic disabilities, were abhorrent to her son. He requested that they be altered, and was told in shocked tones that such a change would require an Act of Parliament. There was no help for it, and he had to content himself with describing the mass as 'superstitious and idolatrous' in the lowest possible tones. At his insistence a Government Committee was appointed to revise the oath, but strangely enough it was extremely dilatory, and the formula which it finally evolved was no great improvement. In the first encounter the King was worsted, for the Government did not mean to bestir itself, and George V had later to pronounce the same objectionable words, which were, however, altered in August 1910.

Edward VII held very strong views on religious schism, which had been the curse of his Scottish, if not of his English kingdom, and was very anxious not to hurt the feelings of his many Catholic subjects. He had never forgotten the Orangemen of Upper Canada, with their foolish banners and pictures of King Billy, and had no intention of pandering to that sort of Protestantism. When a zealous body known as the Protestant Alliance took him to task for visiting the Pope in 1903; for permitting the marriage of his niece, Princess Ena of Battenberg, to the Catholic King of Spain in 1906; and for his presence at a Requiem Mass for the murdered King of Portugal and his son in 1908, he blandly turned their objections aside and ignored them. But when Lord Denbigh gave the toast of 'Pope and

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King' at a Catholic banquet in 1903, it was the King's turn to object, and though Lord Denbigh offered to substitute in future the toast of 'His Majesty the King and His Holiness the Pope' Edward VII refused to consider it, saying that 'the name of the sovereign should come first and alone'. This was constitutionalism, but it was also very like the spirit which had moved his mother to declare in her girlhood that Louis XIV was 'her great admiration'.

In the style of the Grand Monarque, then, he continued his relations with his Cabinet. Before long he asserted his right to exercise the prerogative of mercy, which by use and wont had devolved from the Crown upon the Home Secretary, and reaffirmed the claims of the sovereign to be the fount of honours. This he guarded in every possible way, from establishing a highly personal decoration, the Order of Merit, which should have no connexion with the official honours of the New Year and Birthday lists, to objecting to every infringement of his privilege, however remote or unintentional. Thus in 1904 he refused to sanction the proposal of the Sanitary Board of Hong Kong to bestow a medal for anti-plague services, saying that 'no medal should be struck or worn except as emanating from the sovereign'. But this monarchical thinking did not confine itself to titles and medals: it penetrated the bastions of the Government and worked along the same lines as Victoria's noble obsession with the prestige of Britain.

The language of diplomacy was not altogether pleasing to the King. The modern habit which had led him to deliver his first Privy Council speech extempore was leading him to transact some of his business by telephone and to practise less and less the stately tergiversations of official prose. Particularly did he desire that the language of British diplomacy should be more lucid and more forcible when addressed to foreign powers. It was very hard for him to realize that the good old days, when Lord Rosebery ordered the *Linnet* to remain at Bangkok and lesser nations cowered before the meteor flag of England, had gone up in the smoke from Boer rifles. The nation had not realized it, and would not for many years to come; Edward VII inevitably desired to act in the old way when new incidents took place. Did the Turks oppress the hapless Macedonians? Then let Britain protect Macedonia by every means in her power. But the Foreign Secretary would not risk war with Turkey. 'Lord Lansdowne is afraid to do anything', said the King.

It was not until 1904 that he hit on a partial solution of Macedonian woes when conversing with the Emperor Franz Josef and Ferdinand of Bulgaria at Marienbad — there should be more British officers in the Macedonian *gendarmérie*. Or did the Persian Government dismiss a British subject from the mastership of the mint at Iran? Then at least a very strong protest should be sent to Persia. The King learned with disgust that the Foreign Office held that Britain had no right to object. Lord Palmerston had held very different views on the rights of British subjects! The pundits of the Foreign Office, possibly unwilling to raise the delicate subject of Persia again, omitted to inform him that they had offered the Garter to the reigning Shah of Persia who proposed to visit Britain and had expressed a desire to slay a deer, either at Balmoral or in Windsor Great Park, for the flocks and herds of the Crown had evidently a fatal attraction for the Shahs of Persia. The matter was still being disputed while the Shah was in Britain, but the Foreign Office triumphed and a mission was sent to Teheran to invest the Shah with the Order of the Garter in his own palace. The King could only stipulate, though not with entire success, that the Garter should never again be bestowed on any one who was not a Christian.

The fount-of-honour dogma had sustained a blow, but the King subsequently scored a signal victory on the issue of finance. During King Edward's reign foreign monarchs visited Britain more often as the guests of the Crown than had been the case when Victoria was Queen, for she had left the reception of foreign guests to the Prince of Wales — usually at his own expense, and now the Cabinet objected to the King's demands on the Treasury for the reception of his brother sovereigns. They said that the Crown should be financially responsible unless they themselves, through the Foreign Office, considered the visits to be of political importance. The King retorted that he was as good a judge of what was politically important as the Foreign Secretary, and insisted that the Treasury must pay. These were formidable claims, which even if the Treasury's liability were admitted, made the judgment of the Foreign Office of less account than the judgment of the monarch. King Edward, in that clash of arms, had greatly consolidated his position.

One royal visitor who was likely to tax the Treasury to the utmost was Wilhelm II, who would willingly have come to England oftener than he was asked. He had volunteered to keep the first

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anniversary of dear Grandmama's death with his English relatives, but they, having had more than enough of him on the occasion itself, decided to circumvent him. The King proposed that the Prince of Wales should visit Germany at the end of January, so that the Kaiser, who adored parading his kinsfolk in Berlin, would be compelled to stay at home to receive him. But this visit never took place. The proposed Anglo-German alliance had not prospered. In his formal Christmas message to the Kaiser the King had said quite plainly, 'King Edward wishes now as ever that England and Germany should stand side by side in all points; but to stipulate this co-operation in a formal treaty would be difficult, as such a treaty in the House of Commons would meet with hesitation and difficulties. King Edward, however, will not cease, together with Your Majesty, to work for the peace of the world'. To this language, at once frank and tactful, Wilhelm II replied darkly, 'The Government and country *must* follow me even if I have to "face the musik" (*sic*). May your Government never forget this and never place me in the jeopardy to have to choose a course which would be a misfortune to both them and us'.

For the moment the Kaiser was more displeased with his uncle's Government than with his uncle. Mr. Chamberlain, for long the moving spirit in desiring an Anglo-German Alliance, had at last understood that Hatzfeldt and von Bülow were only playing with him, and had reversed his policy in a bitter public attack on German cruelties in the Franco-Prussian War. The German counter-attack was of course violent, and had risen to great heights by January 1902, when Mr. Chamberlain was described by a German Minister as 'the most accursed scoundrel on God's earth'. This was too much for Edward VII, who immediately cancelled his son's visit to Berlin. He would not tolerate German insults any more than he would tolerate having his Cabinet called 'unmitigated noodles' by the Kaiser — even though in his inmost heart he may have sometimes thought that that was what they were.

By the autumn of 1902 the sovereigns were on a more friendly footing. The Peace of Vereeniging, signed on May 31st, had put an end to the long exacerbation of the Boer War, and the splendours of the Coronation had soothed war-shaken nerves. The Kaiser could no longer be put off, and in November was invited to shoot at Sandringham. 'We might perhaps teach him bridge', said the King

hopefully, but the Kaiser's inexhaustible flow of words precluded the peace of a game of cards. His exhortations ranged over every field from politics to sport, for, as his Berliners said, '*Gott weiss alles aber der Kaiser weiss noch besser*'. This trick of 'knowing better', or *Rechthaben*, exasperated his uncle, particularly when he was cross-examined on his new motor car. 'What oil do you use — petrol?' asked the Kaiser, and the King had to confess his ignorance. 'Potato oil is the best', stated the omniscient one, and a few days later he called his uncle to examine a collection of bottles which had just arrived by express messenger from Germany and with the help of which he proceeded to give a disquisition on the manufacture of potato spirit. It was very reminiscent of the scientific bent and thoroughness of the Prince Consort, and perhaps the King remembered a little boy who watched a conjuror and learned that 'Papa knows how all those things are done'. It was no wonder that when Wilhelm departed the King was heard to murmur, 'Thank God he's gone'.

But his nephew was not easily to be shaken off. The Berliners declared that I.R. after Wilhelm's name stood not for Imperator and Rex but *Immer Reisefertig* — 'always travelling' — and most of his journeys seemed to be devised so as to nullify the effect of the King's visits to foreign courts. Protocol demanded that the new sovereign should pay state visits to his brother rulers, and when he went to Rome in April 1903 the Kaiser proposed himself for a visit directly afterwards, following the same tactics at Vienna in September. Henceforth Edward VII was pursued by a *Poltergeist* with a withered arm and a ferocious pair of moustaches.

To the French capital, however, the Kaiser did not follow him. For two years Edward VII had been meditating a line of action very congenial to himself, which was the improvement of Anglo-French relations. Undismayed by the wave of unpopularity which had engulfed himself as well as his country between the episode at Fashoda and the end of the Boer War, and undeterred by the many checks which the cause of an *entente* or alliance had encountered since his first visit to Paris in 1855, he was anxious to try again, and to discover whether he could conquer the existing difficulties by the sheer force of his personality. Moreover, he had reason to hope that there were statesmen in France who would meet him half-way. He had appointed Lord Carrington to announce his accession to the President of the French Republic and to the Kings of Spain and Portugal in 1901, and

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Lord Carrington had been most cordially received at the Elysée. M. Loubet, the President, said it would be a crime if any one — he cared not who — were to make mischief between France and England, and his Foreign Minister said even more. Lord Carrington described M. Delcassé, who had been at the Quai d'Orsay for three years, as 'a sharp, clever dark man of about forty-five, sociable and civil', who begged him to tell the King that no effort would be spared to foster and maintain the happy relations between France and Britain. On this language, which would scarcely have been echoed by the majority of M. Delcassé's compatriots, the King pondered long: he saw that two of the leading men of France favoured an *entente*, and that a third most valuable Frenchman was about his court in the person of M. Paul Cambon, the newly-appointed Ambassador. On the British side he knew that Mr. Barclay, the secretary of the British Chamber of Commerce in Paris, had worked hard to pave the way for a preliminary arbitration on the outstanding difficulties and that Lord Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary, was constitutionally disposed towards an understanding, for in his veins ran the blood of Talleyrand. The moment was auspicious, and the King announced his desire to visit Paris in state, after his official visits to the courts of Lisbon and Rome.

Anxious as were Loubet and Delcassé to promote the *entente*, they were more urgently anxious about the kind of reception the King would get in Paris where Fashoda and the visit of Paul Kruger were still poignant memories. Visions of hooting mobs, hurtling stones, perhaps even the assassin's bullet, assailed the always inflammable imagination of the French Government. The newspapers, headed by the *Matin* and the *Patrie*, were violently Anglophobe, and between them and the nationalist politicians Paris was ripe for mischief when May 1st came round.

The King arrived from Italy, for he had gone to Rome after a most successful state visit to Lisbon, and, wearing a scarlet uniform — the British uniform about which the French had said so many rude things — he took his place in an open carriage for the drive across the city. Paler than his wont, but smiling blandly, he responded with alacrity to the very occasional salutes which came his way. '*A bas les Anglais!*' was the cry most in vogue, varied by '*Vivent les Boërs!*' but there were no personal insults. Paris, to tell the truth, was just a little taken aback by '*Edouard*'. That stately figure, clad in scarlet, was

a different man from the *flâneur* of the Café Anglais and the *opéra-bouffe*. Paris was impressed; but his suite was not impressive, and the equerries were heartily booed. It was one of these who remarked, when the company had arrived safely at the British Embassy, 'The French don't like us, Sir', and received the laconic reply, 'Why should they?'

Probably no other English sovereign except Charles II could have said such a thing. Patriotism or cowardice would have actuated all the others to meet such a remark either with an outburst against that inferior race the French or with timid platitudes about improved relations; but strong or weak they would have viewed the dislike of the French from an exclusively English angle. Only Charles II and Edward VII were broad-minded and sophisticated enough to appreciate that there was a French point of view as well. It is in the light of that brief 'Why should they?' that the triumphs of the state visit to Paris must be seen. Otherwise it is hardly possible to understand how the King could turn a population of critical, cynical and hostile individuals into his adoring friends inside four days. What, after all, did he do that any tactful prince might not have done in his place? He went to the theatre and the races, he dined at the Elysée and gave a dinner at the Embassy, and when he spoke in public he said just the right things about his admiration for France and his hopes of seeing the two countries on lasting good terms: that was much. He communicated to all who met him his dazzling charm and his real cordiality: that was more. But the thousands who were shouting '*Vive Edouard! Vive notre roi!*' as he drove away had never come in contact with him, they only saw his smile and read his speeches. What was the secret? It was, that every one knew he had written those speeches himself. When he said that he was delighted to be back in Paris where he was always made to feel at home, every one knew that he meant it. There were years of apprenticeship behind that sentence, memories of wild gaiety and serious consultations, images of a past that stretched back fifty years to the evening when a child had read an Emperor's wish to be *au milieu de ce peuple Français, que j'ai tant aimé*.

The French people had heard the Czar utter very similar words of friendly admiration on his state visit, but with their ruthless clairvoyance they perceived that while his had been the language of protocol, King Edward's was the language of truth. They knew

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that he had greatly loved them, as *le Prince de Galles*: they realized that as King he had brought them rare gifts of comprehension, of the insight which prompted him to ask, 'Why should they?' and though they never knew of that remark the people of Paris might well have answered in the sunlit confidence of May 1903 that they would learn to like the whole British nation for the sake of one man, and that man was *le Roi Charmeur*.

CHAPTER III

THE ENTENTE CORDIALE, 1904

THE practical result of this visit to Paris was the Anglo-French Convention, the treaty of the Entente Cordiale, which was signed on April 8th, 1904. It was preceded by an Arbitration Treaty dated October 14th, 1903, which formally referred the outstanding differences between the countries to the Permanent Court of Justice at The Hague, although in reality the Permanent Court had only to ratify the series of compromises which were arranged beforehand and embodied in the final treaty. A system of barter was employed whereby France abandoned the rights which the Treaty of Utrecht had given her in Newfoundland, and gained instead important rectifications along her Senegambian and Nigerian frontiers. Siam was divided into spheres of influence, the British withdrew their protests against the French customs duties in Madagascar, and the powers established a *condominium* in the New Hebrides. The most important barter was in Egypt and Morocco, the French recognizing the British status in Egypt in return for the British promise to recognize the paramount interests of France in Morocco, while each guaranteed to the other a free passage through the Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal. The secret clauses, which soon were no secret at all, laid down that this free passage should hold good even if the policy of the powers should be modified 'by the force of circumstances' and arranged for the cession of certain Moroccan territory to Spain 'whenever the Sultan shall cease to exercise authority over it'.

Spain, as a Power interested in Morocco, and Russia, as the ally of France, were informed officially of the terms of the Anglo-French Convention, and to all other nations the treaty was made public through the press. Four days later the German Chancellor, Count von Bülow, stated in the Reichstag that Germany had no fault to find with the treaty or with the Anglo-French *entente*, which there was no reason to suppose was directed at any one power. This peaceable attitude was changed within the month, when the Chancellor announced that the Convention overrode the Moroccan

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settlement of 1880 and the German-Moroccan commercial treaty, and the Kaiser publicly expressed the hope that current events would keep his people alert and temper their courage. These speeches hinted that German reactions to the Entente Cordiale might have serious consequences

This was not unexpected, least of all by Edward VII, who, knowing the force of German pride and suspicion, realized that his nephew would resent an alliance between Britain and any other European power. There had been, since 1902, a formal alliance between Britain and Japan, and Japan had declared war on Russia in February 1904, so that if Russia had asked her ally France to come to her assistance a very awkward situation would have arisen between France and Britain. This did not take place, but the Dogger Bank incident showed what risks were being run. On the early morning of October 22nd, 1904, a Russian naval squadron, agreeably remote from the theatre of war, opened fire on a fishing fleet from Hull which was trawling on the Dogger Bank, sinking three boats and causing some loss of life. Admiral Rojdestvensky explained that he had mistaken the trawlers for Japanese torpedo-boats, but unfortunately he did not stop for explanations until he had reached the Portuguese port of Vigo, and King Edward voiced the indignation of all his people when he complained to the Czar of the inhumanity of the Russian squadron in sailing on and leaving the fishermen to their fate. But after the dispatch of a strongly-worded telegram he grew calmer. As he said, to insist upon apologies and indemnities might start a war with Russia, and that was too serious a matter to be risked for the sake of a few fishermen. It was a considerable change from his own attitude to Macedonian and Persian affairs two years earlier, and showed the profound effect which the Entente Cordiale had already had on British foreign policy. To have entered the war with Russia would not have been a very serious thing from the military point of view, since Britain's ally Japan was quite competent to win the war single-handed, but since Russia would then have invoked the aid of her own ally, Britain would have been forced into war with the neighbour with whom she was in the very act of concluding a treaty of friendship.

King Edward thus found that to attain his most cherished ends he had to reaffirm the doctrine of expediency. There is no doubt that the Anglo-French Convention was much nearer his heart than

the Japanese alliance, which had been promoted by his government, or the purely family understanding with the Russian court. To save the Entente Cordiale, which he had striven to promote for nearly thirty years, he would have sacrificed Russia and Japan together: his Ministers knew this, and were quite prepared to accept France's offer of mediation in the Dogger Bank incident and the very mild ruling of a tribunal of arbitration which met in Paris. By the spring of 1905 King Edward might claim that war with Russia had been averted thanks to the understanding with France, itself the happy termination of centuries of enmity: he was well on the way to earning the title of Edward the Peacemaker.

No doubt he was invariably peaceful in intent. His domestic policy of attempting to reconcile the irreconcilable — the Commons and the Lords, the Unionists and the Irish Nationalists — was the coefficient of his foreign policy of peace by alliances, that Edwardian version of the League of Nations, in which all the countries were to be, not so much the allies of each other, as the allies of Great Britain. Had circumstances been different he would have welcomed an Anglo-German treaty and an Anglo-American treaty — he was friendly as well as correct in his correspondence with the dynamic American President, Mr. Theodore Roosevelt. But the European system of alliances was already formed. When Britain published her understanding with France she was inexorably drawn into the orbit of the Franco-Russian alliance and ranged herself in tacit opposition to the Triplice, so that the murder at Serajevo four years after King Edward's death was only the match applied to a train of powder which had long been laid.

As a corollary to wishing that Edward VII had begun to reign earlier it has often been regretted that he did not reign longer, in the belief that 'the Peacemaker' would have been able to effect a compromise which would have saved the peace of the world in 1914. This is very doubtful, and for the old reason that there was another factor in the situation — Germany, led by a man who was determined that round his helmet too the flowers of a triumphal march should fall.

It is not really accurate to call Edward VII a peacemaker. Rather was he a man who, in a colloquial phrase, 'liked a quiet life', and thought harmony a more comfortable state of affairs than dispute. Edward the *Peaceable* is nearer the mark, but since he was

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also Edward the Diplomat he was fully alive to the various means by which peace might be preserved. He never spelt peace as appeasement or allowed an attack on Britain's honour, by going unpunished, to demonstrate to interested small nations that the old lion was moribund. He was the staunch supporter of all those who sought to reform the British Army and Navy, for his peacefulness was positive, not negative, and he believed that a strongly-armed Britain was the best guarantee of world tranquillity.

So much for the King at home. The King abroad was a valuable asset to his country in another way. His family ties with foreign courts, reaffirmed by frequent visits and meetings with their rulers and statesmen in Britain or on foreign territory, had the happy effect of making the countries concerned look up with the old respect to Britain, whose genial King was so obviously their friend and might even be their protector. In the words of Sir Edward Grey, he conveyed to the people of the countries to which he went — both to the government and to the people — the impression of the good disposition and the goodwill of the people of his own country.

The opinion of Sir Edward Grey, who was Foreign Secretary during the second half of the King's reign, is obviously of more value than that of a Labour M.P. like Keir Hardie, who never came into contact with the King, but Mr. Hardie did not hesitate to air his views — not, that is, after the King was safely dead. In the obscure columns of the *Merthyr Tydvil Pioneer* he stated boldly that while King Edward 'was supposed to be labouring abroad for his country's good he was simply enjoying himself as a very amiable, pleasure-loving man of the world who was bored by politics and had not the capacity to understand foreign relationships'. For sheer fatuity this judgment would be hard to equal, and yet it expressed the views of that growing section of the British people which came to believe against all evidence that the brains of the nation were concentrated in the working class. The day of the Little Man had not dawned: the films of Charlie Chaplin, the post-war cartoonists and the early speeches of Hitler had yet to give his form and voice to the world; but in this dictum of Keir Hardie is to be found the Little Man's inferiority complex, his jealous belief that any man born to the purple, from the king to the most impoverished of Scots lairds, is automatically an incompetent trifle. For Mr. Hardie was never invited to Marienbad, and had to content himself in the vacation

with a cure on the Cumnock uplands. Lunch with the King at Marienbad would have hypnotized him as Londonderry House hypnotized Ramsay MacDonald, and he would have seen, moreover, that foreign politics were the breath of life to the King.

For Edward VII had a clue through the labyrinth — the friendship of France. There is no doubt that he regarded the Entente Cordiale as the coping-stone of British foreign policy during his reign and in some measure as a personal triumph, but he was not content to rest upon the laurels of 1903. He understood the French so well that he knew how they longed to go on from strength to strength in demonstrations of cordiality and how easily their *amour-propre* was wounded by brusquerie or neglect. While he lived he devoted himself to buttressing the *entente* by diplomacy and by the pageantry consistent with the splendour of his court. No detail which might gratify the French was too small to escape his notice. When President Loubet visited Aldershot during his official visit to England in July 1903, the King discovered that when he arrived at the review ground six bars of 'God Save the King' would be played by the band, followed by four bars of the *Marseillaise*. 'Four bars of the *Marseillaise* is too short', said the King, and when the President of the Republic arrived the opening bars of the British National Anthem served as a prelude to the magnificent harmonies of the entire *Marseillaise*.

Again, when King Edward visited the Kaiser at Kiel in June 1904 he took with him Baron Estournelles de Constant, one of the French leaders of the arbitration movement, and the Prince of Monaco, who was very sympathetic to France, to prove that French interests would be represented in his entourage while he was in Germany. The visit was tolerably successful, though the progress of German naval construction gave the guests food for thought, and Admiral von Tirpitz, who hated Britain, declared that he saw the King 'exchanging meaning looks and words with Selborne, the First Lord of the Admiralty,' during the review of the German Fleet.

It was precisely because of that fleet and the spirit behind it that His Majesty's Government had been willing to conclude the Anglo-French Convention. It must be emphasized that King Edward did not promote the Entente Cordiale with a view to gaining a diplomatic victory over the Kaiser, for he had been its champion when Wilhelm II was a mere boy, and had never wavered in his support of France ; but his Cabinet, which did not share the royal enthusiasm for

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the French, was actuated by the fear of attacks on the British Empire and the need to find allies. The only European nation capable of such attacks was Germany, for France, while still a first-class power and now the head of a colonial empire, had failed — as much by her favourite vice of self-destruction as by the aggression of Prussia — to regain her position under Bonaparte. The two new first-class powers to emerge at the beginning of the century, Japan and the United States, were more likely to become involved with each other than to interfere in Europe.

What steps did Edward the Peacemaker take to avert the danger of war with Germany? There he was, the son of a German father and a mother of German blood, speaking English with a German accent and bound to Germany by the memory of his two dead sisters and the presence of a hundred kinsmen in the petty courts of the Reich; with an unparalleled knowledge of Europe and great ability to handle men — could not he have conciliated the natural aspirations of a growing people with the aspirations of his own subjects, to whom the Germans were so much akin? But the uneasy thought imposed itself — were they so much akin? With all that application, sobriety, craftsmanship, business instinct and culture, was there not also a streak of fanaticism which made them easily swayed by an unscrupulous leader, a masochistic pleasure in military bullying since through the Army one could inflict suffering on others — a whole jungle of psychological growths which were utterly antipathetic to the easy-going British nature? The King tried to be amiable — to talk of peace, to insinuate that an arms race could only end in disaster; he supported Haldane and the Liberals when a second attempt at an understanding with Germany was made in 1909 — and with a sigh he admitted that it could not be done. He remembered the rape of Schleswig, the slaughter of Königsgrätz and the siege of Paris, and he could not believe in the pacific intentions of Germany. Perhaps Fritz Wilhelm, Emperor and brother-in-law, might have made him forget how Prussia had risen; but Wilhelm II, Emperor and nephew, was in his own noisy person a constant reminder of Prussianism.

Moreover — and this Edward VII had from his mother — he did not see why the foreign policy of Great Britain should revolve round the keeping of the peace with Germany. In earlier days foreign countries had revolved round Britain, and even now when her

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supremacy was likely to be challenged there was still no reason why she should not go her own way and allow others to follow. The policy of Edward VII had its obvious drawbacks: it was autocratic, it was sometimes swayed by personal bias, it overlooked certain modern tendencies, but *it was a policy*. When Britain abandoned her 'splendid isolation' and decided to re-enter the continental system, the King used his influence to unite her with France, to such an extent that a host of reliable witnesses, from his intimate friend de Soveral to Lord Cromer the pro-consul of Egypt, did not hesitate to call him one of the chief makers of the Entente Cordiale; and that Entente was concluded without any slavish fears of what Germany would say or do. There was no divergence of opinion on either side, no peering about to see if any other arrangement would be more repaying. Unhappily this was not always to be the case.

On March 31st, 1905, the Kaiser, while cruising in the Mediterranean, landed at Tangier and made a violent speech on the protection of German interests in Morocco and of the independence of the Sultan, patently directed at the Anglo-French Convention and the French assumption of rights in Morocco. When King Edward heard of this exploit he observed with disgust that his nephew was a political *enfant terrible* in whose assurances one could have no faith, and addressed himself to encouraging the French, whose spirits were wavering. Prince von Radolin, the German Ambassador in Paris, had been threatening M. Rouvier, the Prime Minister, saying that if a conference were not held at which all powers interested in Morocco could state their views, Germany would declare war. M. Delcassé refused to consider such a conference, which was contrary to the spirit of the Entente, but all the government was against him and the support of President Loubet was not enough. During the spring of 1905 King Edward went twice to Paris and was closeted with Loubet and Delcassé, urging the latter to stand by his guns, but it was in vain. Deserted by Rouvier and his panic-stricken colleagues, attacked by a group of financiers, the great Foreign Minister was compelled to resign on June 6th. M. Rouvier, by a process easily comprehended by any student of French politics, described himself as 'the national liquidator' and seized the portfolio of Foreign Affairs for himself.

He soon discovered that he was in the toils of von Radolin and, while the Entente Cordiale was celebrated by a visit of the British

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Fleet to Brest and of the French Fleet to Portsmouth, he was compelled to promise that Delcassé's foreign policy would be abandoned.

The proposed conference opened at Algeciras in January 1906 and soon resolved itself into a duel between the Entente Powers and Germany, the other delegate nations playing the part of innocent bystanders. Germany had been extremely active beforehand, trying to get contracts in Morocco, snubbing Spain, spreading rumours that Britain would desert France and simultaneously promising Britain that all danger of war would be averted if the government would tell France that British public opinion was against her. The net result was to stiffen the resolution of the new Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey; to cause the British delegate at Algeciras, Sir Arthur Nicolson, to urge resistance on his French colleague, M. Revoil, and to make King Edward say to Paul Cambon, 'Tell us what you want and we are at your side without restriction and reserve'. In March the King went to Paris to discuss the conference and lunched with Delcassé, which was very striking, since the latter was out of office. As Lord Esher commented, 'Delcassé was too successful. The Republican spirit devours the ablest man, unless the man is strong enough — like Napoleon — to kick over the Republic'.

But Delcassé was not alone. The national liquidator had himself been liquidated and the Rouvier ministry fell on March 9th. Sir Edward Grey profited by the resulting confusion to send all the powers a telegram announcing that Britain supported France (in the very words of the King) 'without restriction or reserve'. The question at issue, the policing of the Moroccan ports — for after being defeated on various financial points the Germans were attempting to end the influence of the French *gendarmérie* — was of less importance than this declaration. The Germans had bluffed and their bluff had been called. On March 26th they agreed to the policing of all the eight ports by France and Spain, and left Algeciras having failed to implement their boastful promises and seeing France more securely entrenched in Morocco than before.

Between the incident at Tangier and the Conference of Algeciras two striking facts emerged. One was that in spite of the Entente Cordiale a cowardly and venal French politician, or group of politicians, would yield to German bullying and liquidate the national interest and the national pledges for their own profit. This was a fact so painful that King Edward preferred not to dwell upon it,

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but it was to be repeated after his death, in 1911, during the Premiership of M. Caillaux, and again, on the scale of classical tragedy, in 1940.

The second fact was that an 'experiment in resistance', as André Tardieu called it, had been entirely successful. King Edward had remembered all that his mother had said about standing up to the Germans, and he had needed no reminder, for he had always known it instinctively, that those who sought the friendship of France must be prepared to give their own in return, and that without restriction or reserve.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIANIA, 1905

BETWEEN the announcement of the Entente Cordiale in 1904 and its first diplomatic victory two years later the Kaiser had time to perfect his technique of complaint. He announced that the Entente was part of a policy of encirclement, inspired by his Machiavellian uncle and designed to cut off Germany from the rest of Europe and prevent her from gaining a foothold in other continents. This fear of encirclement was the penalty which Germany had to pay for her expansion under Bismarck, just as Britain paid for her era of conquest by having to defend the seaboard and territory of her vast Empire against encroachment; and it was also a magnificent excuse for Germany under Wilhelm II and again under Adolf Hitler to arm herself to the teeth against her encircling enemies.

What was the truth of the matter? That Germany had on her western frontier France, whom she had defeated in 1870, and on her eastern frontier Russia, a sprawling inert mass easily conquered by the Japanese in 1905. Of the other contiguous states Denmark, Holland, Belgium and Switzerland were small, peaceful and quite incapable of attacking the powerful Reich, while Austria-Hungary, and Italy further south, were her allies. In all continental Europe there was only one combination which Germany had serious cause to dread, and that was a France regenerated after her defeat of 1870 and united with a Britain at last awakened to the dangers of German ambitions. This combination had now taken place, but 'encirclement' was hardly an accurate description of it. His unwilling listeners, however, had long ceased to expect accuracy from the Kaiser.

In spite of his complaints Wilhelm II had good cause for gratification in the summer of 1905, when his tactics of preventing encirclement by detaching from each other the members of a possible hostile coalition seemed to be crowned with success. Through his servants, Count von Bülow (who was given the title of 'Prince' as a reward) and Prince von Radolin, he had preyed upon the weakness of Rouvier until it was possible to eliminate Delcassé and cause a partial reversal of his policy. The signs which pointed to a coming

defeat of the Conservative Government in Britain indicated that Lord Lansdowne, the friend of Delcassé, would also have to leave office, and the future Liberal Government might be more friendly to Germany than its predecessors. The Kaiser, hoping that a wedge had been driven between France and Britain, now turned his attention to the separation of France and Russia. He had long dreamed of a Russo-German pact of friendship; and since the accession of the weak Czar Nicholas II had tried by every possible blandishment to increase his personal influence and that of Germany at the Court of St. Petersburg. In July 1905 he arranged a meeting with the Czar while cruising off Finland, and at the Island of Björkö persuaded Nicholas II to put his signature to a form of alliance between their countries, declaring that their ancestors, 'Frederick William III, Queen Louise, Grandpa and Nicholas I' approved the deed, for 'undoubtedly they were looking down from above and were all surely full of joy!' His dupe, on returning to Russia, was speedily apprised by Count Lamsdorff that such a treaty was contrary to the existing Franco-Russian alliance and must be considered null and void, while in Germany Prince von Bülow took a firm line with his capricious master and declared that if the Emperor proposed to direct foreign policy without consulting his Ministers, his Chancellor at least must be permitted to resign. All that remained to the Kaiser from the fiasco of Björkö was the memory of his own dramatic words about the ancestral cloud of witnesses, and he determined to repeat them in another form to a less malleable relative, his Uncle Bertie. It was in the middle of the Conference of Algeciras, when it was already apparent that Germany was not going to carry the day, that the Kaiser thought it might be prudent to re-establish friendly relations with the King. Since the episode at Tangier and the fall of Delcassé, King Edward had been very cold to his German relatives. He had forbidden the Prince of Wales to attend the marriage of the Crown Prince Wilhelm to Duchess Cecilia of Mecklenburg in June 1905, which meant that for the first time in nearly fifty years no member of the British royal house was present on an important family occasion in the German Court. Later in the summer he himself had pointedly avoided his nephew during his journeys to and from Marienbad, which occasioned some disquiet in the German circles which disapproved of the Kaiser's erratic bellicosity and would have been glad to be on better terms with

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Britain. The Kaiser himself felt slighted. There was no pleasure in triumphing over Uncle Bertie unless he was present to observe one's triumph. Accordingly he sent the King a letter in the spring of 1906, asking him to let bygones be bygones, which was well enough, and ended with a reference in the Björkö style to his Grandmama. 'I feel sure that from the home of Eternal Light she is now looking down upon us, and will rejoice when she sees our hands clasped in cordial and loyal friendship.'

The King took this effusion at its face value. He had more serious preoccupations. The last months of Conservative rule had been marked by friction which made him not altogether sorry to see the last of Mr. Balfour and his colleagues, for the Entente Cordiale had brought some constitutional difficulties in its train. The system of barter employed in Newfoundland and in Africa had necessitated the cession of territory by the British, and the question at issue was, whether the power to cede territory rested with the Crown or with Parliament. In theory and in previous practice it rested with the Crown, but in the debates on the Anglo-French Convention Mr. Balfour stated that there could be no cession without the consent of Parliament. The King immediately remonstrated with Mr. Balfour, and received a highly philosophical treatise on constitutional practice in reply, which drew from the King the shrewd observation, 'He is always so vague that probably he is wrong'. But like all experts in equivocation, Mr. Balfour could be clear enough when it suited his convenience. He spoke with such force on the parliamentary control of the cession of territory that the King, after one more effort — when Somaliland was in question — was forced to yield, and this important prerogative of monarchy passed from the Crown.

Mr. Balfour was incorrigible. He even contrived to attack another royal prerogative while his own position was in danger. In 1905 a little wind of defeat, forerunner of the mighty Liberal tempest of the following year, was running through the Government benches and the aftermath of the South African War began to have a disastrous effect on majorities. In September 1903 Mr. Joseph Chamberlain had left the Cabinet to devote himself to the cause of tariff reform and imperial preference, ideas which had presented themselves to him while he toured South Africa earlier in the year. In 1904 another new idea came out of the newly acquired territory when the Legislative Council at Pretoria received the sanction of the British

Government to employ Chinese labour for work in the mines, native labour being scarce since the war. The King told Mr. Balfour that he was delighted at this development, but the Opposition clamoured, not without reason, that the coolies were to work as slaves in South Africa, and that Britain, where humanitarians like Wilberforce had fought to abolish negro slavery, had put the clock back a hundred years. The murmurs increased in volume and by the summer of 1905 the Government's position was precarious. On July 29th it was defeated by four votes on the Irish Land Purchase Bill, and the Opposition was shouting 'Resign! Resign!' but Mr. Balfour blandly refused — indeed he produced some philosophical proofs that both sides were right, but he would not go out. The reason he gave, of 'general administrative convenience', was not very convincing, and he was violently attacked by Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. The King was inclined to support him in his decision to remain in office: four votes was not an overwhelming majority, and an election in the summer would be very inconvenient — thus argued the apostle of expediency, and then was outraged to find that Mr. Balfour did not really care if he had the support of the Crown or not, for he held that the House of Commons alone could dictate the dissolution of Parliament. This was the spirit of Cromwell's day, and was reminiscent of the scene at one forced closure of the Commons in the Civil War period, when an angry member had cried, 'No power on earth but itself can dissolve the Parliament — be sure of that!' But it was entirely contrary to the usage of centuries, which had established that Parliament could only be prorogued or dissolved by the Sovereign. It was in vain for Edward VII to hold himself in readiness to dissolve Parliament. Mr. Balfour had no intention of permitting a dissolution until it was forced upon him by the will of the people acting through their representatives.

If he had found such opposition among the Conservatives, who presumably had an innate respect for monarchy and the hereditary principle, what sort of treatment was the King likely to receive from a Liberal Government? In his youth he had been a Whig, like his mother before him, and had surrounded himself with Whig friends, but Whigs and Liberals were two different orders of beings. Whigs had been the champions of small nations, Liberals preferred to address stately remonstrances to big ones. Whigs had believed in Greek independence and Italian unity, Liberals denounced auto-

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cratic imperialism in Siberia and plutocratic imperialism in Morocco. Decidedly Liberals were more complicated intellectually and had more scruples and more ideals than their Whig predecessors — the King wondered if they would be less susceptible to his personal influence. With Radicals — with Republicans like Sir Charles Dilke and the young Joseph Chamberlain — he had been eminently successful, but that had been in the days when the immorality of Charles Parnell and the atheism of Charles Bradlaugh had been full-blooded subjects of controversy. How could one compare these giants of the past with Campbell-Bannerman the Little Englander and Edward Grey the bird-watcher? The King was insensibly beginning to live in the past. He remembered that battle of Titans, the constitutional struggle between his father and Lord Palmerston, and admitted that the stealthy filching of his prerogatives by Mr. Balfour was less heroic. The Queen and her Consort had fought Palmerston tooth and nail on the royal right to see all dispatches before they left the country, and Palmerston, after excuses about the need for haste, had had to yield: but Mr. Balfour's Government did not trouble to make excuses. As far as possible they omitted to request the King's authority for their actions, or even to inform him of them beforehand, and left him to hear of them, as in his mother's reign, by the reports of leading statements in the House of Commons. Under-secretaries were appointed without his knowledge, and, venting his rage upon his long-suffering valet Chandler, he was compelled to fall back upon his lesser prerogatives, and made a belated re-entry of the intellectual field with his strictures on the Poet Laureate, who 'wrote such trash', and his insistence that the American naval historian, Mahan, should not become Professor of History at Cambridge. Mr. Balfour, surveying these literary gyrations, smiled sarcastically. Royal authority could be demonstrated harmlessly in these uncongenial spheres. Then — and his smile faded — he recollected that royal authority was still paramount in the diplomatic field. The King supervised the appointment of Ambassadors, and while he no longer had the power to cede territory he still retained the right to break off diplomatic relations with foreign countries, and for personal reasons at that.

The most striking example of this control of diplomacy was given in the King's reactions to the murder of the King and Queen of Serbia in June 1903. King Alexander, a weak-willed young man,

had committed the *gaffe* of marrying one of his mother's Ladies-in-Waiting, but he had not, like the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in a somewhat similar case, made her his morganatic wife. This marriage, and other causes, fomented a palace revolution, and on the night of June 10th, King Alexander and Queen Draga, surprised and defenceless, were brutally murdered in their own apartments. A Servian chieftain named Peter Karageorgevitch, who, though sojourning in the blameless city of Geneva, was reputed to be the brains behind the assassination, now returned to Belgrade and was proclaimed king, immediately raising to places about his court the officers whose regicide had paved the way for his accession.

Upon this King Edward insisted that diplomatic relations with Servia should be broken off and the British Minister recalled to London. He refused to alter his decision when Russia and Austria decided to recognize King Peter; for, he said, 'Russia and Austria are interested countries and there is no need for England to recognize a government composed of assassins'. Nothing could make him waver from his attitude, not even the entreaties of the Russian and Italian Ambassadors, who visited Windsor in 1905 to plead for the resumption of diplomatic relations with Servia. King Edward would send no man to represent him at the Court of King Peter until the latter had removed the regicides from his entourage. A year later his resolution had its reward, and as soon as King Peter had complied with his request a British Minister again presented his credentials at Belgrade. King Edward had proclaimed his loyalty to hereditary monarchy, even when it was represented by such unattractive individuals as their late majesties of Servia, and in the interview with the official mediators he had explained his attitude very clearly. After stating that public opinion in Britain had been greatly shocked by the double murder, he went on to say:

'I have another and so to say a personal reason. *Mon métier à moi est d'être roi.* King Alexander was also by his profession a king. As you see we belong to the same guild, like labourers or professional men. I cannot be indifferent to the assassination of a member of my profession, or, if you like, a member of my guild. We should be obliged to shut up our business if we, the kings, were to consider the assassination of kings as of no consequence.'

There could be no more lucid statement of a creed. King Edward, by comparing monarchy to a trade union, gave a modern phrasing

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to what was, beneath its semi-humorousness, an entirely serious and almost medieval conception of monarchy. The pupil of the Consort scarcely went so far as to insist upon the divine right of kings, which had helped to bring about the fall of the Stuarts, but he obviously believed in the divinity that doth hedge a king and considered that whoever raised his hand against his sovereign was doubly guilty as murderer and regicide. His saving grace was that while he passionately believed in the rights of kingship he also believed in the rights of the people. Such a scene as that which took place at St. Petersburg in 1905 was, he thought, equally to be reprobated with the Servian murders. The course of the Russo-Japanese war had revealed the discontent in as well as the weakness of the Russian Empire, and regardless of the looming danger of Siberia, a general strike was declared. Since many of the individuals concerned still looked upon the Czar as the Little Father who could solve all their problems, it was decided to beg him to receive a petition from them at the Winter Palace.

Had the Czar had the courage to agree the whole subsequent history of his life and reign might have been different. But his timid nature quailed before the danger of assassination which might lurk in the crowd of petitioners. He remembered his father, compelled to take exercise, like any prisoner, in the enclosed courtyard of his own palace, and his grandfather, murdered by the Nihilists, and he refused to leave Tsarskoe Selo. When the petitioners appeared in the courtyard of the Winter Palace, with a crowd of strikers behind them, they were fired on by the troops, and once again there was blood on the snow in Russia — the colour of the Red Flag.

The year 1905, thus regrettably begun, continued infelicitously for Russia with her defeat in the war with Japan and with a series of trials and imprisonments for political offences, the outcome of the general strike. Yet though a stream of prisoners wended their way towards Siberia there was evidence that the dead hand of autocracy might at last be lifted. A constitutional movement was on foot, and it was hoped that the Czar would consent to the creation of a Duma or Parliament — for Russia in 1905 was at the same stage of political development as the Central European countries in 1848. Harassed by these public events, the Czar had to cope with a domestic calamity. After the birth of four daughters a son had been born to the Imperial couple in 1904, and the Czarevitch Alexis had had two distinguished

but ill-assorted sponsors in the Kaiser and King Edward VII. Now it became apparent that the child was extremely delicate, that he had in fact inherited the mysterious disease called haemophilia, and his mother's strong religious feeling was fast turning into fanaticism as she besought the aid of saints and priests for her son's recovery. The Russian succession hung by a very slender thread. King Edward, though he had but one surviving son, might look with confidence to the succession of his own line as the nurseries of the Prince and Princess of Wales filled with sturdy little boys. Their upbringing was somewhat on the old Osborne lines of plain tuckers and rice pudding, though without the old severity of study, for the domestic life of the Prince of Wales resembled the unpretentious family life which Victoria and Albert had contrived to lead inside their stately palaces. Virtue rather than fashion was its inspiration, and already it seemed as though history was about to repeat itself, for the Prince of Wales, who had inherited many of his grandfather's characteristics, also had an eldest son of singular personal charm. This boy, who bore the King's name, seemed to those about him to grow 'more like the *old* family every day', as if the shadow of the Hanoverians had not yet passed away from the British throne. Prince Edward of Wales, unlike the little Czarevitch, was a healthy child: there was no reason to suppose that he would not wear the crown in the fullness of time, and yet Lord Esher witnessed a curious incident one day at Windsor which suggests, in the light of after events, that the Prince had a premonition of his future. He and Prince Albert (later to reign as George VI) were looking through a weekly paper and came on a portrait of Prince Edward with the caption, 'Our future King'. Prince Albert at once drew attention to it, but the elder boy hastily brushed his brother's finger away, and turned the page.

Like many pleasure-loving individuals, the King was more successful with his grandchildren than with his own offspring. He was on excellent terms with his son and did not commit his mother's mistake of keeping affairs of state from the knowledge of his heir: but as he grew older he was particularly successful with young children. He was delighted, therefore, when the two little Fife girls and the Wales boys and their sister acquired a small cousin. After some childless years, Princess Charles of Denmark had given birth to a son, and Prince Olaf was not very old when his benevolent grandfather

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decided that he should some day bear a more illustrious title, for a Scandinavian throne was in the market. Since the Treaty of Vienna Norway and Sweden had been united under Swedish rule, but in the summer of 1905 Norway proclaimed that 'the union with Sweden under one king had ceased', and set about the creation of a new form of government.

Norway was a rather backward country, for its rugged mountains and fjords had prevented the development of transport and the spread of modern inventions, and the fact that there was no resident court in Christiania had restricted social life as the nineteenth century understood it. King Oscar, who was shortly to be succeeded by his son, the long-lived Crown Prince Gustav, occasionally kept his state in Christiania, or rusticated at Oscarshall on Bygdö, but the Bernadotte dynasty had lost touch with Norwegian interests, and the suggestion of the Storting that a cadet of the house should become the independent sovereign of Norway was more tactful than sincere. It was of course unacceptable to King Oscar, who nevertheless could not bring himself to abandon all claims to the kingdom he had ruled, and while he deliberated the Norwegians began to grow impatient. The capital, at least, was modern in its outlook, and from the many Norwegians who had emigrated to America came accounts of the joys of democracy which made their relatives toy with the idea of a Norwegian Republic.

King Edward thought that a republic would be 'very unfortunate'. As a member of the Kings' Trade Union he was bound to support the monarchical principle: moreover, like any other trade unionist he had a relative of his own to recommend for the situation. To a staunch believer in the dynastic marriage, it was somewhat mortifying that not one of his daughters had married a king or an heir-apparent, and the Norwegian vacancy seemed to offer an opportunity, even if belated, of putting a crown on the head of his favourite daughter. The Norwegians themselves seemed ready to elect Prince Charles as their king, and the British Minister at Copenhagen, the Honourable Alan Johnstone, urged him in season and out of season to go to Christiania. But Prince Charles was a cautious man: he did not wish to embroil himself with Sweden. King Edward undertook to soothe Swedish *amour propre*, and had a very good opportunity to his hand, for the second heir of Sweden, the Duke of Skånia, married Princess Margaret of Connaught, the King's niece, at Windsor on

June 15th. The King bestowed the Garter on the bridegroom and his father and created King Oscar an honorary Admiral of the Fleet, but still Prince Charles refused to commit himself. Then the Kaiser, the ubiquitous Kaiser, entered the lists. It was suggested in Norway that one of his younger sons might be a suitable king. Edward VII and Alan Johnstone redoubled their urgency, the King telling his son-in-law to leave Maud and Baby in Denmark for the time being but to go to Norway at all costs and be seen and known during the preliminary arrangements of the new kingdom: he was annoyed by the inaction of Prince Charles when a crown was in the balance. The King and the Kaiser sent warning messages about each other flying across Europe: now it was the King who told Prince Charles that his father and grandfather must be on their guard if the Kaiser visited Copenhagen during the summer, now it was the Kaiser who complained to the Czar at Björkö of his uncle's Norwegian intrigues. But by the autumn the matter was settled amicably enough. The Storthing unanimously elected Prince Charles to the vacant throne, and King Edward had gained a sphere of influence in the North Sea. The Prince, whose procrastination had been rewarded, announced that he would rule as King Haakon VII and in that character he crossed the Sound, accompanied by Maud and Baby, and entered the fjord of Christiania to a royal salute from the old fort at Akershus and the acclamations of his new subjects of Norway. His departure from that country thirty-five years later was of necessity less ceremonious.

CHAPTER V

LONDON, 1906

IN the early spring of 1906 King Edward had attained the apex of his reign. The satisfactory outcome of the Conference of Algeciras was a triumph for his cherished Entente Cordiale, and at home, the change of government had been accomplished without undue friction. He had no great liking for Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the new Prime Minister, but at least Sir Henry was a change from 'the Harold Skimpole of politics', Mr. A. J. Balfour. His family influence had been enormously increased in Europe and in March 1906 was to be further extended by the betrothal of his niece, Victoria Eugénie of Battenberg, to Alfonso XIII of Spain. He presided benevolently over the meetings of the betrothed couple at Biarritz, when the young King came driving his new motor-car across the Spanish frontier, and shared his pleasure in their happiness with an old lady who had a villa there — the ex-Empress Eugénie, still his friend, and one of the diminishing circle with whom he could exchange memories of the long past. He took a becoming interest in Princess Ena's reception into the Roman Catholic Church, and was full of tactful suggestions for her preliminary instruction and re-baptism — wholly worldly suggestions, designed to make the affair as unobtrusive and as simple as possible. The remonstrances of perfervid British Protestants did not dismay him, but he quite saw the point of the joke — an unusually subtle one for the Kaiser, whose sense of humour was of the Prussian or slapstick variety — when his nephew sent him a statue of the Protestant champion, William of Orange, as a gift to the British nation. The statue might well have been a Trojan horse, for the Ulstermen clamoured for its erection in Belfast or Londonderry, presumably to serve as a base for sectarian brawls, but the King had no intention of permitting this, and the First Commissioner of Works, Mr. Lewis Harcourt, who also had a sense of humour, announced that the figure of William of Orange would be erected near his old palace of Kensington — beside the Orangery.

The Kaiser, of course, saw in the Spanish marriage another move

towards 'encirclement', and was vicariously annoyed on behalf of his ally because King Alfonso had not chosen an Austrian Archduchess for his bride. The Queen-mother of Spain had come from Austria, and during her long regency Spain appeared to be within the orbit of the Triple Alliance, but the Kaiser saw how it would now be. His wily uncle would be cruising to Cadiz or Cartagena, or exercising his charm on the population of Madrid. By this time the King had thoroughly earned the title of 'Europe's uncle', for the Coburg Trust, both in its original form and in its English branch — through the issue of Victoria and Albert — had spread into nearly every European court. The German Emperor was King Edward's nephew, and the Empress of Russia was his niece. The Queen of Norway was his daughter, and three of his nieces were the future Queens of Sweden, Spain and Rumania. The Kings of Belgium and Portugal, and the Prince of Bulgaria, were his kinsmen. The King of Denmark, Frederick VIII, who succeeded in January 1906, was his wife's brother, and so was the King of Greece. A host of his relatives, though in less exalted stations, were rich and princely; they come crowding into the memoirs of the period with their confusing nicknames and their smooth exteriors, beneath which anger and jealousy were so often hidden: Missy and Harry and Sandra and Alicky and Ducky and Dona and Nando and Charly, portly Coburg princes and blonde Coburg princesses repeating the traits of their house unto the third and fourth generation.

The play and interplay of character among his kinsmen was of great interest to King Edward, that ardent student of men and women, and he 'thought he knew something about arr-rrangement' when it came to handling them and their countries. He failed, however, to perceive one thing: that his royal ambassadors at foreign courts were not always strong enough to combat other interests — that even Marie, Crown Princess of Rumania, a true grandchild of Queen Victoria, could not defeat the German sympathies of the Hohenzollern King; that while Alfonso and Ena looked to London for their inspiration the Spanish generals gazed admiringly at the great military machine of Berlin; that although Charles and Maud were wholeheartedly English in outlook, there were professors and teachers in Christiania who regarded Germany as the home of *Kultur*. Moreover, there were already signs that the structure of monarchy was breaking up. Europe was tiring of her

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Romanovs and her Hapsburgs: even of her last reigning house of Bourbon, for on the wedding day of the King and Queen of Spain an anarchist threw a bomb at their carriage and they narrowly escaped death. This incident profoundly depressed King Edward. Perhaps his perspicacity saw in Matteo Morales a portent, more ominous than the foolish boy Sipido, a warning that monarchy was going to count for very little in the twentieth century, and the will of the people, destructive and uncontrolled, for very much.

The British public heard the news of the Madrid *attentat* in the same way as news from Spain has been received since 1588: with phlegm, and the feeling that Spanish melodrama is agreeably remote from Britain, morally as well as actually. Far more concern had been caused by the General Election, and fine old Tories spoke of the Liberal Government as if it were composed of Beelzebub and all his minions. The Liberals had been out of office for nearly twenty years, and were sure to use their overwhelming majority to introduce some ruinous reforms, besides having such fearsome step-children by the hand as Socialism and Woman Suffrage. For the social system and the caste system were beginning to break up with monarchy. The working people of Britain were probably as well off in the reign of Edward VII as at any time in their history, for the bad effects of the Industrial Revolution had been countered by reforms, and the people had not yet lost their independent spirit. There was a feeling of peace and security in the country, trade flourished, and the purchasing power of the pound was high, so that many workers led contented lives and did not look to the State to supply their needs from the cradle to the grave. But this very security, with the extension of free education and the popular press, allowed the working class to produce men who were equipped to voice its woes, and Labour was already a word to reckon with in British politics. The balance of power was subtly shifting from the upper-middle class to the lower-middle and working classes. The aristocracy, who first began to lose their power at the Reform Bill, suffered fresh losses in the reign of Edward VII; and it was one of his misfortunes that he, whose sympathies were naturally aristocratic, came to the throne at a time when the people were determined to have 'fires out of the Grand Duke's wood'. The reign of his mother, whose sympathies were instinctively bourgeois, had coincided with an age when the middle class was paramount — but then Victoria was always a more fortunate ruler than her son.

One of the causes of the break-up of the social system was that the same thing was happening in Britain as had happened to the Greek and Roman Empires and to the Bourbon monarchy in France: the upper classes were beginning to think only of prosperity and the lower classes were wearying of their contrasting poverty. The wealth which imperial expansion had brought, the adroit development of that wealth by financiers, the new inventions, all intended for speed, convenience or pleasure, which constantly tempted the purse, made the life of the well-born extremely agreeable in the reign of Edward VII. The gargantuan meals of the period prove how far the fashionable world had gone along the road of self-indulgence; nor were demagogues lacking to point the difference between the eight courses of a Countess in Park Lane and the bread and tea of a sempstress in Bermondsey. Sometimes it seemed to the imaginative that the rattle of tumbrils was not far off. Sometimes it seemed to the more thoughtful as if Society, with its gambling and its discreet adulteries, was bringing its doom upon itself. Sometimes— but then a footman would enter with a Command to a party at Buckingham Palace, and the woes of Bermondsey and Hoxton would be forgotten at the sight of the Queen, wearing a tiara inside the Imperial Crown, and looking ‘a fitting leader of about twelve Duchesses, each one smarter than the other’, as the divine voices of Melba and Caruso soared above the assembled nobility of England. Then the King would beam upon his guests, while a few lynx-eyed intimates watched him for the first signs of boredom, and the Duchess of Sutherland and Lady Londonderry would sail past, confident in their leadership of the most exclusive section of this complex Society. For great ladies, who had inherited the Victorian tradition, still counted at a court where the King and Queen had so strict a sense of form, even if the eye of the former occasionally roved towards the ‘professional beauties’, ladies who challenged the popularity of actresses by permitting their features to be reproduced on picture postcards and whose radiant appearances created a furore among the shabby working girls of the metropolis. Thirty years later photographs of their daughters would appear as advertisements of the cosmetics which gave every typist and shopgirl the same chance of beauty as the blue-blooded publicists, but in the Edwardian heyday the line of class and the line of beauty were co-extensive, and clearly marked. The King still enjoyed the company of lovely and witty ladies, though his circle

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was smaller and possibly more discreet than of old. Mrs. Cornwallis-West, mother of the incomparable Princess of Pless and the young Duchess of Westminster, Mrs. Willie James and Mrs. George Keppel were ladies whom he greatly admired, and he talked frankly to them, but perhaps — since he held that ladies always gave away secrets — not so frankly as he talked to his men friends. His circle of intimates was a catholic one, for it included well-born Englishmen like Lords Esher, Knollys and Suffield, and Jews like the Rothschilds, the Sassoons, Sir Felix Semon and Sir Ernest Cassel, whose management of his investments since 1897 had brought him to the throne clear of debts, to the incredulous gratification of his Cabinet. He liked to frequent men who did things, and to hear bankers and doctors talk of their work. His interest in medicine prompted many a discussion, particularly while travelling, with his medical men, Sir Frederick Treves, Sir Francis Laking and Sir Felix Semon, and he displayed an interest of almost Victorian morbidity in the welfare of their other patients. But of all his intimates the nearest was the Portuguese Ambassador, the Marquess de Soveral — ‘Soveral überall’ as he was nicknamed — whose position at court grew somewhat to resemble that of Baron Stockmar about Leopold and Albert of Coburg. With him the King could talk without reserve upon his favourite theme of foreign politics, and the two veteran diplomats, closeted together at Buckingham Palace, drew up their plans for a twentieth-century Europe on a nineteenth-century model, as veterans are apt to do.

In one branch of politics, however, the King was extremely progressive. He supported the proposals for Army and Navy reform, begun by the Conservative Government and carried on by the Liberals, with vehemence and realism. Since his accession he had taken the keenest interest in all the military details from which he had been barred for so long, although once again he was unfortunate in his moment, since he would have liked a brilliant Army, all tartan and pipeclay and red tunics and shakoes, and succeeded just as Mr. Brodrick was putting the Imperial Yeomanry into khaki. ‘The War Office has khaki on the brain’, said the King, and hoped ‘the facings would be made attractive’. His interest extended to facings, as to every sheepskin, horsecloth, bit-rope and puggaree in the Army, in which he resembled his maternal grandfather the Duke of Kent, whose attention to detail had earned him the title of ‘The Corporal’.

But there was more to be done with the Army than putting it into new uniforms, and when the South African War was over a new Secretary of State, Mr. Arnold-Foster, drew up a plan of reform, the King's only stipulation being that there should be no half measures, which were worse than useless. Half-measures being dear to the British heart, Mr. Arnold-Foster made haste slowly, and made proposals which were excellent as regards organization but omitted to supply Britain's first need — soldiers to serve in her New Model Army.

The new plan provided for a Defence Committee, finally known as the Committee for Imperial Defence, an Army Council, and the replacement of the Commander-in-Chief, between whose department and the War Office there had often been overlapping, by an Inspector-General. Lord Roberts, who had been Commander-in-Chief, courteously refused to become Inspector-General, and the King, who had had his brother's claims in view since the days of Poor Uncle George, urged the merits of the Duke of Connaught. He was a little dashed to learn that his brother would receive no special form of salute.

The most distinguished soldier of the day after Lord Roberts was Lord Kitchener, who was in India, and at daggers drawn with the Viceroy, Lord Curzon. So difficult did the situation become that the latter insisted on resigning on the eve of the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to India, and was replaced by Lord Minto. There was one of many notorious quarrels between public servants in an age where the titanic disputes of Palmerston and Lord John Russell, Gladstone and Disraeli, had been exchanged for string-pulling and intrigues, an atmosphere to which the forthright First Sea Lord, Sir John Fisher, seemed to bring a fresh sea breeze. Sir John did not hesitate to name Germany as the ultimate enemy or to castigate those whom he held responsible for Britain's lack of defence preparations. Lord Esher, who made his own enemies in more orthodox ways, once advised him to 'play upon the delicate instrument of public opinion with his fingers and not with his feet', but 'Jacky' Fisher never abandoned the *coup-de-pied* technique, and with the approval of the King urged the increase of naval construction to keep Britain ahead of the growing German fleet. Since it was admitted that the Army should be organized not only for defence but to take the field at any point where the interests of the Empire

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were threatened, Sir John's ambition was 'to get it to sea somehow or other' and to give at least the First Army Corps some training in embarkation, and in disembarking on a hostile shore. He was alive to all the new developments in naval warfare from artillery to submarines, and greatly rejoiced at the spirit of the young officers who commanded the new invention, reporting while on manoeuvres in 1904 that 'all the mice died in their cages and two of his crew fainted, but the young lieutenant of the submarine didn't seem to care a d—n whether they all died so long as he bagged the battleship he was after! And he practically got her and then came up to breathe! Depend on it we shall have more "Nelsons" and "Trafalgars" so long as we continue to propagate such young bloods as these'.

In such narratives the King delighted, and he only smiled tolerantly when Sir John modestly described his reorganization scheme as 'Napoleonic in its audacity and Cromwellian in its thoroughness'. But the King's good opinion was not shared by the new Prime Minister. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was on better terms with the King since a meeting at Marienbad had revealed that the Premier, though an unrepentant 'Little Englander' of the Boer War, was also a lover of France and her language and literature, besides being a friend of General de Gallifet, but no such tie bound him to the First Sea Lord, and Campbell-Bannerman roundly described Esher, Clarke and Fisher as 'a damnable dictatorial domineering trio'.

The King had feared that a Liberal Government would call a halt to Army and Navy reorganization, and soon had cause to denounce their 'cheeseparating policy' when in their first year of office they struck one dreadnought, one destroyer and four submarines from the naval programme. Loud was the wrath of Sir John Fisher, but he did not fail to acknowledge the 'unswerving support' he received from the King, who had not relaxed his determination to see Britain well armed. The appointment of another philosopher to the Secretaryship of War made the King groan in spirit: he had suffered much from philosophy in the days of Mr. Balfour, and feared the worst when Mr. Haldane announced that he proposed to create 'a Hegelian Army'. But his fears were groundless. Mr. Haldane, though a friend of Germany and hopeful of an improvement in Anglo-German relations, was resolved to bring the Army up to date, and besides strengthening the regular Army, he created a reserve of

citizen soldiers by the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act of 1907. The King heartily approved of the Territorial movement and himself summoned to the palace all the Lord-Lieutenants to urge their support of the County Territorial Associations. About these branches Haldane himself was at first doubtful, but Lord Esher thought that they might be 'a partial solution of the insoluble problem of voluntary service'.

That this particular problem was insoluble, Conservatives and Liberals were cheerfully agreed, and Lord Roberts, who held that military service should be compulsory and not voluntary, was a voice crying in the wilderness. In spite of a certain uneasiness about Germany's intentions, Britain still preferred to compromise, and bodies such as the National Service League and Lord Esher's 'Islanders' seemed a patriotic way of avoiding conscription as practised by the lesser breeds without the law. Even boys, and in due course girls, were encouraged to join bodies which would train them 'to do their duty to God and the King', and Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the hero of Mafeking, was advised by the King, when in doubt about the next step in his career, to 'stick to the Scouts'. (Edward VII was fond of giving succinct advice: he told Sidney Lee, who was casting about for a literary subject, to 'stick to Shakespeare; there's money in him'.) So Sir Robert stuck, and presently the youth of Britain was enjoying freedom and interests such as a repressed little Prince of Wales might once have envied, and serving as a model for later and more brutal organizations of childhood in other countries. The Scouts were not militaristic, and never mentioned Germany, but they had the significant motto of 'Be Prepared'.

France, who took up *le scoutisme* with enthusiasm, would have been more enthusiastic still if Britain had adopted *le service militaire obligatoire*. It was an early and constant defect in the Entente Cordiale that Englishmen did not seem willing to give the same service to the state as Frenchmen, and were by implication less serious about their possible future obligations. There was no doubt about the King's enthusiasm or about his loyalty to old friends, for when he visited Paris incognito in March 1906 he conferred not only with M. Fallières, the new President, and the talented Ministers, including MM. Briand and Poincaré, who were then in office, but also with Loubet and Delcassé, who were not. That visit, and the holiday in Biarritz, did him good, for he had had a bad attack of bronchitis

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in February, worse than his first attack in February 1905, and was in poor spirits. The Liberal Government had begun to show its teeth. Some of the new Ministers were much to his liking, and with Haldane and with Sir Edward Grey, the son of his former equerry, he was on excellent terms. There were unimpeachable names in the new House of Commons, and some which were not yet to be found in Debrett: a brilliant young man from Birkenhead, named F. E. Smith, was on the Opposition side, and among the Government supporters were a man from Criccieth and a man from Lossiemouth — strange and remote outposts, henceforth to be marked on the political map. The King prepared to 'arr-rrange' them: he found, as he had expected, that some of them were as susceptible to royal favour as their predecessors. John Burns, for instance, a noted Radical, was 'a revelation in a gold-laced coat' and very delighted to make a double bow to royalty when the new King of Denmark paid his state visit to London. Mr. Lloyd George was in the offing on that occasion, but was not brought forward to greet the sovereigns. King Edward did not love Mr. Lloyd George.

The first encounter in the great constitutional battle which was preparing took place over Mr. Augustine Birrell's Education Bill. This was designed to remove all religious obstacles, including tests for teachers, from the path of popular education, and to give public authorities control of religious instruction in schools. All the religious bodies in the country were up in arms at once. The Archbishop of Canterbury saw a curtailment of the authority of the Church of England, and Nonconformists and Roman Catholics alike refused to surrender their right to denominational instruction. Mr. Lloyd George declared that there should be a Minister to direct education in Wales, a piece of rhetoric which drew from the King an instant objection to the 'unconstitutional' proposal to create a Minister for Wales without his approval. The Bill passed the Commons, although the Irish Nationalists, Roman Catholics almost to a man, voted with the Opposition. It was sent to the House of Lords, and that Conservative body tore it to pieces, suggested a number of crippling amendments and returned it for revision. The Commons rejected the amendments *en bloc*, and the Government, realizing its defeat, allowed the Bill to drop.

Now Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had already roused the King's resentment by asking him to create seven Liberal peers in the

Birthday Honours of 1906 — it was too many, King Edward thought, even for a party with a good deal of leeway to make up. But he perceived that much more might presently be required of him, for there was one sure way for a Liberal Government to get its Bills through the House of Lords, and that was to swamp the Conservative strength by a majority of new Liberal peers, which the King would create *en masse* at the request of his Cabinet. From such an abandonment, or mockery, of his prerogative the King was naturally much averse. But the hereditary issue had been raised, democracy was on the march, and Mr. Lloyd George had summarized the matter beyond a doubt in saying, 'When the dissolution comes sooner or later it will be on a much larger issue than the Education Bill. It will come upon this issue: whether the country is to be governed by the King and his Peers or by the King and his people'.

CHAPTER VI

DUBLIN, 1907

KING Edward's political life was now divided into two parts: the foreign part, which was extremely successful, and the domestic part, which was much less so, since his natural antipathy to what he had called 'parish-pump politics' had coincided with a period when the parish pump engrossed his Government. As regards Imperial politics, his function was much the same as it had always been — to serve the Empire with his personality, with the difference that now the citizens of the various Dominions came to him instead of his going to them. Younger members of the royal family had to take up the burden of the tours which the King had initiated as Prince of Wales, while at Buckingham Palace or Windsor he received delegations from Canada or Australia and sent them home rejoicing. On the whole, imperialism was out of fashion, especially since the Liberal Government came to power, for it was associated in the public mind with the jingoism of the early days of the Boer War. That was the attitude at home, while in the Dominions themselves the reign of Edward VII was a period when all the elements of the early colonizing days had to compose themselves into a concrete whole, so that the inhabitants had their own problems to solve. They felt less bound to the motherland than their parents, whose hearts had turned back to some Scottish glen or English meadow, and who had revered the Queen as the symbol of their childhood's land.

There is no evidence that the King fully realized this subtle change of attitude in his possessions beyond the seas. His mind naturally became less flexible as he grew older, and on certain occasions he positively objected to the inevitable developments inside the Empire. When there was a proposal to co-opt what he doubtfully called 'a very clever Native' to the Executive Council of India, he urged the Viceroy not to take such a dangerous step. Natives were all very well in their place and were no doubt becoming cleverer every day since Britain took a hand in their education, but somehow the King could never quite dissociate them from the nose-ring or the loin-cloth. The system just becoming fashionable in Council schools,

of giving a backward or refractory pupil some post of honour as an encouragement to do better, did not commend itself to the King when applied to politics. He remembered the sepoys, and Cetewayo, and King Theebaw, and he had no doubt that protective discipline was the thing for his coloured subjects.

In his nearest overseas possession discipline had long been at a discount. The curse of Cromwell still lay upon Ireland and the special quality of disruptive passion which she had brought to British politics seemed to be the undoing of every man who tried to solve her problems. In all the years since the King's first visit to Ireland as the little Earl of Dublin, the country had produced but one real leader in Charles Stewart Parnell, and he had broken the chief Edwardian commandment of 'Thou shalt not be found out' with such disastrous consequences to his cause that when Edward VII came to the throne, ten years after the death of Parnell, Ireland was still rent by the matrimonial infelicity of Captain and Mrs. O'Shea.

The accession of King Edward seemed to promise better things in Anglo-Irish relations. It was known that he had long desired to live in Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant, which argued his interest in Irish matters — though it might also have argued his desire for a definite position, any sort of position, which involved real work. His visits, as Prince of Wales, more frequent and far more cheerful than the Queen's — the racing fraternity of Leopardstown and Punchestown regarded him as a man and a brother — had always been successful, though the emotional nature of the Celts frequently beguiled them into an enthusiasm, misleading to its object, which they did not really feel.

The song called 'The Mountains O' Mourne' which began its long popularity in King Edward's reign, adequately reflects the Irish attitude to him. The Irishman in London is made to say,

'I've seen England's King from the top of a 'bus.

I never knew him but he means to know us',

and continues in the same tone of gentle sarcasm —

'But now that he 's visited Erin's green shore

We'll be much better off than we've been heretofore',

telling how the polite Celt, repressing his natural feelings, joined in the acclamations of the Londoners —

'I cheered, *God forgive me*, I cheered with the rest.'

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That was the attitude, though the King was unconscious of it, underlying his receptions as sovereign in Ireland: they cheered, God forgive them, they cheered with the rest, but the struggle for Home Rule, the quarrel between Orange and Green, remained as bitter as if the King had never left London.

Dublin, in fact, was the only capital where his personality did not have its accustomed success. There, he could not charm the ruler of a foreign state, because he himself was the ruler and the state was not officially foreign. He could not astound all who heard him with his fluency in a foreign language, because he spoke no Erse, and very few people in Dublin would have understood him if he had. When he spoke in public he could not dilate on his deep personal knowledge of things Irish (using his Punchestown betting-book as memoranda) or compliment his audience on the glorious history of their country, since from the point of view of British royalty it contained not a few incidents better forgotten. The curious thing was that the King himself showed no disposition to forget them; once on the throne he approached the Irish question in his mother's highly personal way, and postponed his first state visit because of his anger with the Irish Nationalist M.P.s who had had the bad taste to cheer when the British defeat at Tweebosch was announced in the House of Commons.

But a new and brilliant personality had appeared on the Irish scene. This was George Wyndham, who had been appointed Secretary for Ireland just before the King's accession, and who addressed himself to the problems of his charge with so much grace and ability as to rouse hopes that these might at last be solved. George Wyndham approached much more nearly to the 'King's ideal Knight' than the Prince Consort, whom Tennyson had in mind when he wrote his famous preface: George Wyndham, after forty years, stands out among the men of his day with all the distinction of high breeding, rectitude and exceptional mental qualities. It was he who gently persuaded the King to overlook the Nationalist exuberance and visit Ireland in 1903.

Before the visit took place the Irish themselves had found one evergreen cause of strife in the Secretary's office. In 1902 Mr. Wyndham appointed as his Under-Secretary Sir Antony Macdonell, an Irishman and a Catholic, which at once enraged the Protestants of Ulster; though if he had appointed a Belfast Presby-

terian the South would have been equally distraught; and if he had tried to compromise and sent for an Anglican Civil Servant from Whitehall, the whole distressful country would have groaned, 'Another Englishman!' Sir Antony was a very able man, and very active in the preparation of the Irish Land Purchase Bill, which George Wyndham regarded as his chief reform, and which, by arranging for the sale of land by the landlords to their tenants, was expected to work an agrarian miracle in Ireland.

On the day that the Bill passed its third reading the King arrived in Ireland, 'beaming', as Mr. Wyndham said, 'enough to melt an iceberg' and tactfully ignoring the lack of a loyal address from the City of Dublin. He and the Queen were determined to be pleased with everything, and the facile Irish were soon delighted with them. There was no lack of loyalty in other directions, and he had to receive eighty-two addresses from various representative bodies on an occasion of some hilarity which Mr. Wyndham has described. 'I stood on the steps', he said, 'and presented each of the eighty-two deputations. They were to present the addresses. But they did everything but that: shook the King's hand and marched off with address under arm: were retrieved and address extracted. The last touch came when the spokesman of the Land Surveyors touched the tip of the King's fingers, shot the address into the wastepaper basket and bolted at five miles per hour. The Queen was very naughty and did her best to make me laugh. I cannot adequately describe the kindness and coolness of the King. He coached them in a fat cosy whisper, "Hand me the address", and then accepted with an air and gracious bow as if gratified at finding such adepts in court ceremonial.' That was *le Roi Charmeur* in the good days.

After the city visits were over the King and Queen went on a cruise along the west coast of Ireland, anchoring in its remote harbours, to pay informal calls on the fishermen and the crofters of the glens. These gentle folk were a very different race from the alert peasantry of Aberdeenshire, or indeed from the people of the twentieth century: in imagination they still dwelt in the world of ballad, and 'by their fires of peat told of the wanderings of king's sons'. It was hard for them to reconcile their stout elegant visitor with the princes of the Celtic twilight, and some of them, unaware of the very name of their sovereign, courteously saluted him as Henry the Seventh.

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King Edward, who was 'good at people', was not particularly good at cottagers. He could never display the same genuine interest in their lives as his mother had felt for the crofters near Balmoral: his conversation with them was apt to tail off into the 'Yes, yes, yes' and 'Poor man, poor man' that filled up awkward pauses. He was above all a man of the cities, and it was in the banquet-hall or the chamber of state, blazing with lights and jewels, that he appeared to the best advantage.

More than a year after his first visit to Ireland an organization of landlords was formed under the name of the Irish Reform Association. A month later, this body published a report on measures of self-government for Ireland which included a scheme for the devolution of Parliament from Westminster to Dublin. This plan aroused general indignation in London: in the Palace because the King found it 'unconstitutional', a word which always came readily to his tongue, and in the Parliament because Members had heard more than enough of Home Rule and self-government, and knew themselves incapable of solving the separate problem of Ulster. It was from Ulster, determined to remain a part of Britain at all costs, that the fiercest anger came, for the Unionists of the North denounced Sir Antony Macdonell as the author of the offending paragraphs. Mr. Wyndham went to his defence, but there was a growing clamour for the Under-Secretary's recall. But it was not Sir Antony Macdonell who resigned. It was George Wyndham whose nerves broke under the strain of endless quarrels and the thanklessness of public life. 'A soul by nature pitched too high', he withdrew from the arena in a state of complete collapse. Once more Ireland had devoured a man who had served her well.

After the retirement of George Wyndham and the General Election of 1905 the Irish Nationalists gathered their strength for a new movement towards Home Rule, and now there was no one to interpret Ireland to the King. He suspected Walter Long, the new Secretary, of trying to 'run the country', for the disillusionment of his life was beginning to appear in spurts of anger against people who he imagined were trying to get the better of him. It was not altogether with a good grace that he agreed to revisit Ireland for the International Exhibition of 1907. He had been to so many exhibitions since the opening of the Crystal Palace that their profoundly similar routine was only another source of boredom to him now, and

he feared, not without justification, that Dublin was not a sufficiently impressive capital to house an 'International' exhibition. He had gone to Paris in February — *that* was another story, and the Queen, who had accompanied him for the first time in nearly twenty years, had taken the Parisians by storm. Madame Fallières, the wife of the President, had provided an unfortunate contrast to the beautiful Queen, as, 'dressed in plum coloured velvet, she trotted and waddled alternately behind her'. In Paris, all had been gaiety and good feeling: it would be quite otherwise in Dublin. Moreover, there was the new Lord-Lieutenant, Lord Aberdeen; he and his lady were Radicals of a type which the King could neither understand nor influence, for they derived from the humanitarianism of a Shaftesbury rather than from the robust Whiggery of a Palmerston. Lady Aberdeen had been one of the group of noble dames who had approached Archbishop Benson, away back in Queen Victoria's reign, asking him to preach against the sins of society and turn the hearts of countesses from bonnets to Bibles; but piety had gone out of fashion with the bustle, and good Lady Aberdeen was one of the few peeresses who dared to be old-fashioned in the Edwardian era. She had founded the 'Onward and Upward Association' to brighten the lives of servant girls in Aberdeenshire (they received a certificate of merit if the interval recognized by society elapsed between their marriage and the birth of their first child) and it was told in Buchan that she had exhorted an audience of farm housewives, hard as their native granite, to encourage their maids to sing at their work so that their kitchens might be filled with fairies. More than one indignant matron exclaimed, as she untied her bonnet strings that night, 'Fairies, quo' she! I'm for nae fairies in my back-kitchen!' King Edward was of the same mind. There were troubles enough in Dublin without fairies in the kitchen, and he carefully investigated the rumour that when Lord Aberdeen had been Governor-General of Canada he and his wife had sat down to dinner in the servants' hall once a week. Perhaps he was afraid, though the rumour was formally denied, that his stay at Viceregal Lodge might coincide with a kitchen dinner.

It was Lord Aberdeen himself who suggested that there might be a difficulty about staying at the Lodge, and the King replied curtly that of course the royal party would remain aboard the *Victoria and Albert*. The City of Dublin once again refused a loyal address, which

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was almost part of the programme, but this time there was a disconcerting novelty. It was discovered that the State jewels of the Order of St. Patrick were missing, and what was worse had been missing for several weeks. This misfortune, vexatious to any sovereign, was an outlet for the King's pent-up spleen. He raged and would not be comforted, and condemned Irish dishonesty in violent language. The visit was spoilt from the outset and long after it was over the King was still fulminating against Ireland and the Lord-Lieutenant, whom he considered to have been lackadaisical in tracing the criminal. The Ulster King of Arms, the custodian of the jewels, was dismissed from his post, but the jewels themselves were not found, and the unsolved mystery coloured the King's attitude to Ireland for the brief remainder of his reign, exactly as her personal indignation with the Fenians had coloured that of his mother. Finally he abandoned the investigation, disgusted with the inept detective system of Dublin and perhaps regretting that being on bad terms with his cousin, King Leopold, he could scarcely ask the royal sleuth to repeat his Sipido success by the banks of the Liffey. If he had shared Lady Aberdeen's belief in fairies, he might have suspected the leprechauns.

CHAPTER VII

REVAL, 1908

THESE events in Ireland, while devoid of humour for the persons concerned, were a comic *obligato* to the graver happenings of the year 1907. In spite of her defeat at Algeciras Germany had not abandoned hope of destroying the Entente Cordiale, and the visit of the new British War Minister, Mr. Haldane, to the German manoeuvres in August 1906 seemed to be an innovation from which German propagandists might draw double profits, for it annoyed the French and gratified those who, in both the countries concerned, still hoped for an Anglo-German *entente*. But what he saw at the manoeuvres only seemed to spur on Mr. Haldane to fresh endeavours in Army reorganization as he followed up the creation of an Imperial General Staff with that of an Officers' Training Corps, and encouraged scientific research into modern war methods.

Energetic as Mr. Haldane was, his plans did not entirely satisfy a still more energetic man — M. Clemenceau, who had recently come to power in France. The latter considered that the success at Algeciras would not be a real victory for the Entente Cordiale unless it were consolidated by serious preparations for the next attack, and he wished to see the treaty of 1904 confirmed by a military convention. This formality was just what the Liberal Government were determined to avoid: they had taken over the Entente Cordiale lock, stock and barrel from their predecessors, but the Liberal Party was divided upon it, for while some were Little Englanders, and disliked the idea of continental entanglements, others championed an understanding with Germany, to which the French convention was an obstacle. France had spent large sums on rearmament since 1905, and pressed Britain to conclude a full alliance with definite pledges of military aid: but nothing could be got out of Sir Edward Grey beyond the statement that if Germany went to war with France over Morocco public opinion in Great Britain would probably be on the side of France. It was too vague for M. Clemenceau, too reminiscent of the situation of 1870, and in spite of the *sécret* conversations already taking place between members of the two General Staffs (Britain

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always careful to insist that these discussions were merely hypothetical) he wanted proof not only of the British Army's willingness to march with the French, but of its efficiency.

Britain was proud of her developing Army, but conceded that it was not a match for the German military machine, and depended rather on the maintenance of maritime supremacy. Since the first German Navy Law was passed in 1898, there had been a tacit challenge to that supremacy, and the King was not alone in his disquiet at the new Government's naval economies. There was no doubt that they were extremely pacific in intention, but pacifism, the King knew, did not impress Germany. For his own part, he still pinned his faith to diplomacy, but diplomacy alone was not enough. The major diplomatic event of 1907, the transformation of the Dual Alliance into the Triple Entente, had rather a disruptive than a uniting effect on British sentiment, which was for many reasons inimical to Russia, and was not entirely assuring to the French, who wanted something more specific than an 'understanding'. If they had been tempted to make up a riddle on the theme, they might have asked, 'When is an ally not an ally? — when she is Great Britain'.

The Anglo-Russian *entente* was the outcome of the Conference of Algeciras, where, of course, both countries had been on the side of France; and of the diplomacy of Sir Arthur Nicolson, who had repeated his conference successes as Ambassador at St. Petersburg. The French diplomats were also extremely active, and by another of the fortunate accidents of personality which had helped to form the *Entente Cordiale*, King Edward had already established a sympathetic contact with the Russian Foreign Minister, M. Isvolsky, whom he had first met in 1904 when the British and Russian royalties were in Copenhagen on one of those useful family gatherings which had ended with the death of Christian IX. At that time Britain had been working to forestall Russian influence in Tibet in a manner highly unpleasant for the Tibetans, since it involved a British expedition's entering Lhasa by force of arms. Monks against soldiers seemed to be an unequal contest, but the King said, 'We must be firm with the Tibetans. England's prestige must be maintained'.

England's prestige, it appeared, was at stake also in Persia and Afghanistan, and it was to readjust matters in these territories that the Anglo-Russian Convention was drawn up and signed on August 31st, 1907. Persia was to be divided into two spheres of influence;

and while Afghanistan was to be closed to Russian agents Britain was to enjoy a preferential position in Tibet. In spite of this agreement the Conservatives continued to dread a Russian attack on India, while the rank and file Liberals and Socialists, indignant at the collapse of constitutionalism in Russia — for the Czar had dissolved the First Duma in July 1906 — and at the pogroms directed against the Jews of Poland, clamoured that the Government had betrayed the ideals of Britain in this new understanding. Once again, King Edward failed to realize completely the weight of opinion against Russia. For him, the new Convention was still somewhat of a family affair, with himself and the Kaiser struggling for the soul of the Emperor Nicholas.

The Kaiser was disheartened by the Anglo-Russian Convention. It seemed to him an absolute proof that Germany was to be encircled by her enemies, and he put all the responsibility upon his uncle. Now his attacks on the King became more public and more violent, and on one occasion in particular, when he was the guest of the Order of St. John at a banquet in Berlin, he broke out in a wild complaint that Edward VII was always intriguing and mobilizing the forces of the world against him, concluding morosely, 'He is a Satan! you can hardly believe what a Satan he is!' But later in the year he made a great parade of a friendly visit to his Satan, when he went to London in November to open the new Admiralty Arch. On that occasion he delivered one of his most fulsome and insincere orations on the theme of Anglo-German friendship, the famous 'Blood is thicker than water' speech which harped on the Saxon inheritance of both countries; and in his private conversation at Windsor it became apparent that he was taking Aryan theories very seriously for the time being. He was subject to visions of the Yellow Peril, of Europe at the mercy of Asiatics — that, presumably, was why he had ordered his troops, marching to relieve the Legations at Peking during the Boxer rising, to behave like Huns. His outlook, in the autumn of 1907, seems to tally with the outlook of Jack London, a contemporary author in whom he would have delighted, who as a good Californian was constantly pointing out the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon races (infelicitously called *Samurai*) over the heathen Chinese and the degenerate Latin. Unfortunately the Kaiser's Aryanism was not transmuted into wholesome adventure yarns; it turned to contempt for the Jews. 'There are far too many

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of them in my country', he said. 'They want stamping out. If I did not restrain my people there would be a Jew-baiting.' There was a dark prophecy of the future in those words which might have given thoughtful men pause, had not a more urgent alarm possessed their minds. For on the day when the Kaiser left Windsor, still uttering platitudes of friendship, a new Navy Bill was introduced in the Reichstag providing for the construction of twelve battleships by 1911 instead of four as the programme of 1900 had designed, and also for the construction of four dreadnoughts by 1910. The whole Bill was alarming to a country whose very existence depended on the mastery of the seas, but it was the second clause which fired the imagination of Britain. Hitherto dreadnoughts had been her own particular and expensive toy, and now Germany was proposing to build four at a blow. Then Britain must have twice as many; such was the short and simple creed of the average Englishman and of his King. 'We want eight and we won't wait' became the slogan of the streets, and as 1908 opened Sir John Fisher proposed to 'Copenhagen' the rival fleet — to blow the entire German Navy out of the water without the trifling formality of declaring war. For once he lacked the King's support. The royal sense of form was outraged, and Sir John retired lamenting that there was 'no Pitt or Bismarck to give the order'. By the beginning of February the irrepressible Kaiser had taken it upon himself to write to Lord Tweedmouth, the First Lord of the Admiralty, about British naval affairs, an unorthodox proceeding which the King wearily described as 'a new departure', while he wondered what would have been said at Potsdam if *he* had taken to writing letters to the Marinamt. But the Kaiser could not be expected to break the habits of a lifetime and consider the other person's point of view.

The King had another sharp attack of bronchitis that spring. The fogs of early February, a season when he was always in London for the state opening of Parliament, invariably affected his larynx, already weakened by over-smoking, and as his doctors could never get him to take any precautions until the first onset of his complaint the result was always the same. He was a bad patient, for confinement to his bed or even his apartments depressed him, and he had not much resistance. Any complaint which was merely accidental he could support very well. In 1905 he had sprained his foot severely while shooting, and of that he had made little, hobbling

about courageously on an iron stirrup designed by Sir Frederick Treves; but when his illness was constitutional he lost heart rapidly, as his father had done before him. Then at the first sign of convalescence he was running risks again till Treves, Laking and Semon were in despair, for they dreaded that repeated attacks of coughing would bring on a haemorrhage, as might easily happen to a man of the King's full habit. His asthmatic struggles for breath became painful to witness, and by January 1908 these were overtaking him in public, to the general distress. Otherwise it was a cheerful winter season in London: society was going again and again to see *The Merry Widow*, which the King had enjoyed in Vienna and persuaded George Edwardes to put on in London, or in more serious mood to thrill at a play about the German invasion, called *An Englishman's Home*.

Then there came a sudden order for court mourning, as news of a double tragedy arrived from Lisbon.

Dom Carlos, the King of Portugal, a Coburg cousin of Edward VII, had shocked him by recognizing a dictator, Senhor Franco, under whom he reigned as a puppet king. The Republican party of Portugal considered this action to be a betrayal of the people, and on February 1st the King and his heir, the Duke of Braganza, were assassinated by the Republicans in the open street. These tidings, reaching him when he was ill and moody, plunged King Edward into gloom. He remembered the Lisbon of 1903, decked with banners and flowers in his honour, and tried to reconcile it with the grim city of murder and mourning, where an inexperienced youth, Dom Manoel, soon to be exiled, had assumed the Crown he was not destined to wear for long. Alone in his room the King recited the tale of disaster: Belgrade, Madrid, Lisbon, and added with a sigh the mass murders of the Winter Palace. Was kingship doomed? he asked himself, and would the bullet of a second Sipido one day find his heart also? In 1906, for safety's sake, he had had to decline the Czar's invitation to Peterhof, and King Alfonso's to Madrid. Would Lisbon henceforth be a forbidden city, and was the old world of monarchy narrowing around him? He invited Dom Manoel to Windsor and ordered lavish entertainments in his honour. It was one way of hurling defiance at the whole world of anarchists and dictators: of repeating his superb formula, 'The King of England lives!'

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When his health had improved he went to Biarritz as usual. Another invalid did not improve, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, whose health had been failing, was compelled to resign the seals of office. His successor was the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. H. H. Asquith, who took office on foreign soil, the exceptional circumstances having compelled him to go to Biarritz to kiss hands. It is doubtful if the news that he was to be succeeded at the Exchequer by Mr. Lloyd George was beneficial to the King's health.

Others, indeed, saw some causes for anxiety in the rearrangement of the Cabinet, and when Lord Esher asked Mr. W. T. Stead what he considered to be the rock ahead of the Government he replied laconically, 'Mrs. Asquith'.

The King prolonged his visit to the Continent by a trip to the Northern capitals. Copenhagen, of course, had long been in the April programme, although no great intimacy existed between Queen Alexandra and the new King of Denmark; and this year they went on to Stockholm, where the Crown Prince Gustav was now King. It was a great satisfaction to the King to find that Norway and Sweden were now good neighbours, for it justified his own policy in 1905. He was received with the greatest enthusiasm in Christiania, where he saw Queen Maud in her own palace and his youngest grandchild, now a sturdy boy, playing among the flowers on Bygdö. For almost the last time he was able to infuse into a state visit his own special charm, whose secret had lain in his adaptability, so different from the rigidity of his parents. They had been deplorable travellers, Albert having the disagreeable habit of comparing every beauty spot he saw with a beauty spot in some other country, and the Queen constantly amazed at hearing French spoken in France, or German in Germany. Their son had the flair for getting inside a country as few monarchs have possessed it, but by 1908, apart from this visit to Scandinavia, he was less able to assume the protective colouring of the country where he found himself, or to escape from his character as King of England. The other visits which he paid that year were not calculated to ease the growing tension of his mind.

On returning to London in May the King received M. Fallières, the President of the French Republic, whose official visit was timed to coincide with the Franco-British Exhibition at Shepherd's Bush. A month later M. Delcassé came over, ostensibly to see the Exhibition, but really to hear the details of the King's meeting with the

Czar, which had at last taken place. As St. Petersburg was out of the question, a safer meeting-place was chosen at Reval, and thither the sovereigns went by sea, the Imperial yacht *Standart* being escorted by the Russian Navy, which, having been reduced by the Japanese to the strength of one vessel, served as a guardship to the yacht during the visit.

The Czar was accompanied by his wife and family, and the King sustained the only rebuffs he had ever had from a child at the hands of the Czarevitch, who ran away to play with the sailor nurse whose chief duty was to guard him from all the cuts and bruises which are merely incidental to normal children, but held the danger of death for the heir of the Romanovs. The Russian statesmen were all present, led by MM. Isvolsky, Benckendorff and Stolypin, and the King and his advisors had some talks with them, tending to cement the Anglo-Russian Convention and the Triple Entente. Still the uneasy feeling persisted that Russia was a difficult country, and might be in difficulties of her own before long. It was noted that the singers at a concert on the *Standart* had to go on board the Russian Navy first, where they were stripped and searched as a necessary preliminary. It seemed as if the Czar sat uneasily upon his throne.

If this visit had any good result in Russia, it had none in Great Britain, where it created much displeasure. The Government, of course, had given it their official approval, but they thought the King had gone too far when he created the Czar an Honorary Admiral of the Fleet. They did not realize that this title would always be conferred by the King more readily than perhaps was wise, because his nephew bore it, since the more foreign admirals there were, the less important did the Kaiser's brevet rank appear. The people of Britain had been stirred by the shooting of the strikers in 1905 and had come to regard Czardom as a black autocracy, an anachronism in a century of progress, which sent its adversaries to the salt-mines and had scattered Polish-Jew refugees over Europe and America. Two leaders of the new Labour Party in the House of Commons, Messrs. Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald, led the attack on the King who consorted with 'a common murderer — a bloodstained creature' like the Czar. There was an attempt to defeat the vote of supplies for the visit, and though it fell to the ground it undoubtedly was the expression of a strong national feeling. The King failed to appreciate it; from his point of view it was ridiculous

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to call the Czar by such ferocious names; he was simply Nicky, a weak, kindly fellow much too prone to be swayed by the ineffable Willy, and the husband of poor gentle Alicky who wished no one any harm. He was seriously annoyed to find that the attacks on his Reval visit continued, although the President of the Third Duma had sent a reassuring message to the inhabitants of Britain saying that the visit had the approval of the Duma and of all Russian constitutionalists. Things had come to a pretty pass when the King of England had to get the approval of a crew of foreign Liberals before he could go on a journey! But the Duma was the Czar's affair, the House of Commons was his, and he took unprecedented action against three members who had most vigorously criticized his trip to Reval. When the invitations to the Royal Garden Party, to which all M.P.s were invited, were issued at the end of June, the names of Mr. Keir Hardie, Mr. Grayson, an Independent Member, and Mr. Ponsonby, a Liberal, were missing from the list.

It was very seldom that the King made a public demonstration of his feelings, but the provocation had been great, and it is impossible not to sympathize with his complaint that he was 'the only man in England to have to invite to his house those who had insulted him'. For so many years, like a noble bull, he had stood with lowered head to receive the *banderillas* of the politicians and the press, but now he turned on his tormentors, and braved the storm of criticism which his action had aroused. Perhaps he saw the humour in the anxiety of vehement democrats to attend a royal function, perhaps he was softened by the recollection that all Socialists were not his enemies, since the Trades Union Congress had listened to one of its members describing him as 'almost our only statesman': at all events, he finally restored Mr. Hardie and Mr. Grayson to the list of his guests, but refused to invite Mr. Ponsonby, whose sin had been all the worse because he was a man of good birth and therefore in the King's eyes a traitor to his class.

When the excitement caused by the Reval visit had died down it became incumbent on the King to visit the Kaiser, who was feeling neglected, and was very anxious to receive his uncle in Berlin. The King had been trying for years to avoid the capital, and to meet Wilhelm II only in the course of his journeys across Germany, and this was still his policy in 1908. Cronberg was to be the meeting-place so that the Kaiser might display his growing navy, and the

King and his Ministers decided that the moment was auspicious for a few quiet words on the limitation of naval expenditure. The sight of the Kiel Canal, where a costly programme of widening and dredging had been begun, was a further object-lesson, if such were needed, on the maritime ambitions of the Kaiser.

While the royal party was making for Cronberg, the *enfants terribles* of British politics were showing a keen interest in German affairs. Mr. Lloyd George had recently been fêted in Germany, and had returned in a state of Celtic rapture at the excellence of the German character and the splendours of the Berlin Zoo. Mr. Winston Churchill, now President of the Board of Trade, braved the dog-day heat of August to make a speech at Swansea in which he calmed British anxieties by declaring that Germany had 'nothing to fight about, no prize to fight for, no place to fight in; and we rejoice as a nation in everything bringing good to that strong, patient, industrious German people'. This was a decided contrast to Mr. Churchill's later manner of describing the Germans, which was, as George Eliot said of Mrs. Poyser's conversation, incisive rather than soothing.

His speeches were not always pleasing to the King, but Sir Edward Grey struck a prophetic note in his judgment that although Mr. Churchill was sometimes mastered by, rather than the master of, his phrases, his faults and mistakes would be forgotten in his achievements.

The King's fear was that Mr. Churchill's attitude, if widely followed, would result in further naval limitations, and he was persuaded that 'two keels to one' was the only effective ratio between the British and German Navies. He had recently been disquieted by reports from Denmark, carried by Queen Alexandra and her sister the Dowager Empress of Russia, that wealthy Germans were buying estates across the Danish frontier so as to effect a peaceful penetration of their small neighbour: it tallied with the stories from Paris about the crowds of German students and research scholars who were spreading anti-Entente propaganda through France, and paying venal French editors to repeat the same in their columns. That was the underhand side of German policy, already remarkably developed, but there was nothing underhand in the great fleet which the King reviewed at Cronberg. German might was there for all to see, and the only snub which the King could

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administer to his triumphant host was the sly comment, 'Yes, yes, yes! You've always been fond of yachting!'

But the Kaiser was impervious to snubs. He refused to take King Edward's hints that his visit to Berlin might depend on some reduction of German naval expenditure, and a truce to the arms race which could destroy both countries. That was nonsense — Uncle Bertie *must* come next spring, if not before, and the talk of an arms race was fantastic. He would 'never dream' of going to war with Britain, and since he controlled German foreign policy Britain had nothing to fear. The King sighed, and composed himself to hear the Kaiser's condescending remarks on the British Ministers. Sir Edward Grey he found 'a capable sort of country gentleman. Fishing and the habits of fish were obviously his *real* delight'. The name of Sir Edward Goschen, whom the King desired to see as British Ambassador in Berlin, caused the Kaiser to 'mutter something about the Ghetto', for he had by no means got rid of his Jew-baiting fantasy: but he approved the appointment at the end of the royal visit.

Before the summer was over the King had one more important interview, this time at Marienbad. Accompanied by Sir Edward Goschen, whom he was preparing for his new duties in Berlin, he discussed the development of the Entente Cordiale with M. Clemenceau, intransigent as ever on the need for a stronger British war machine. He bluntly asked the King if Britain's policy was the same as it had been one hundred years before — to prevent the domination of Europe by any one power. 'If it is', he said, 'then you ought to look things in the face. If war comes and we are smashed for want of timely and efficient help from you, you will afterwards be obliged to incur responsibilities vastly greater than any now requisite — or you will have to bow your necks to the victor.' These words, the final proof of which was delayed until 1940, were acknowledged by the King to be just. The stumbling-block of the Entente was the egoism of both countries — Britain unwilling to commit herself too far, France demanding guarantees for her own security; the latter secretly determined not to be forced into war because the British naval supremacy was threatened, the former as resolute not to fight for *la revanche* and Alsace-Lorraine. Clemenceau at least was frank. 'Once let the French realize', he said, 'the price which France may probably have to pay for Britain's friendship if her [Britain's] military resources are

allowed to remain as they are now, and away goes the Entente, away the men who promoted it, and away go the friendly feelings which are of so much advantage to both countries.'

The King fully appreciated this point of view, and since what he had seen at Cronberg had confirmed his belief in a strong alliance with France, he hoped that his Government would soon adopt 'two keels to one' and other standards as a warning to potential aggression. Nor had he long to wait for an illustration of what aggression might be. Early in October Count Aerenthal, the Austrian Foreign Minister, announced the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Austrian Empire, on the pretext that Russia, the protector of Serbia, was about to interfere in these provinces. Both King Edward and his Foreign Secretary were confounded. There is something pathetic in the King's amazement that such things could happen just after he had seen the Emperor, when they had been on such good terms together! Sir Edward, from a less exalted social sphere, deplored Count Aerenthal's lack of the public school spirit, and the Government waited with foreboding to see if Russia would declare war. But that consummation was six years away, and the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was merely a competent rehearsal of a well-known later technique — that of finding out how much Britain and France would tolerate in the way of *Machtpolitik*. Germany, of course, was behind her ally, and no one believed the Kaiser's theory that Austria's actions in the Balkans were due to King Edward and to no one else. The Kaiser was merely jealous because Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria, the King's kinsman and friend, had seen advantage to himself in the situation and proclaimed himself the Czar of his adopted country.

As the November fogs closed down upon London, the King sat thinking in his palace. Were charm and tact and friendliness of no more use in diplomacy? If the Kaiser could rant in London that blood was thicker than water and then hurry home to take steps which might cause blood to flow; if the Emperor could meet one as an old friend and disturb the peace of Europe as soon as one's back was turned, what had become of the rules by which one had lived? Was King Edward VII, in this world whence monarchs could be so summarily hustled into the next, already an anachronism? The humours of the Kaiser's situation could not rouse him from his melancholy. That worthy had succeeded in rousing a tempest in his

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own empire by an interview, published through the carelessness of Prince von Bülow, in the *Daily Telegraph* of October 28th, in which he stated that he (practically alone among the Germans) was the friend of Britain and had helped her to win the Boer War. Unable to endure the resulting unpopularity he had departed hot-foot for Damascus. But even with the Kaiser out of Europe the political skies were dark enough, and his sixty-seventh birthday found the King a prey to moods of self-doubt and uncertainty which his mother had never known.

CHAPTER VIII

BERLIN, 1909

THE King's visit to Berlin had been fixed for the beginning of February, and after the New Year his Ministers had to consider what line they should advise him to adopt and should follow themselves in regard to Germany. The reports from Cronberg coupled with the rape of Bosnia-Herzegovina showed clearly that the Triple Alliance had embarked on a career of power politics which might end in disaster for Britain and her friends: on that all were agreed; the difference of opinion arose on how to stop it. The spirit of appeasement, so nearly disastrous to Britain a generation later, was already to be found in the Cabinet of 1909, though it was expressed in several different ways. Men of high moral qualities like Mr. Haldane, who was bound to Germany by many intellectual ties, were anxious to make a convincing attempt at the restoration and maintenance of good relations. The Chancellor of the Exchequer and the President of the Board of Trade looked at the economic aspect of the matter. The arms race would become too costly for both countries; there was even hope (there always has been that fond hope) that Germany would not be able to stand the strain and that her financial and economic system would crack. Those who were inimical to the French understanding and the corollary agreement with Russia harped on the theme that Britain had bound herself to a policy of revenge, and should try while there was yet time to persuade 'that strong, patient, industrious German people' of her good intentions. The Liberal Government as a whole desired to point to some achievement in international goodwill to compare with the Entente Cordiale of the Conservatives. They had been in power for three years and in spite of their stupendous majority had little to show but the Army and Navy reforms, and sundry plans for domestic legislation which scarcely satisfied the non-military and idealistic section of their supporters. All the indications pointed to an attempt at an Anglo-German understanding more especially since the current Moroccan dispute between France and Germany (arising out of a

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brawl at Casablanca between two French police inspectors and the clerk of the German consulate, who was conniving at the desertion of Foreign Légionnaires) had been satisfactorily settled by the Permanent Court of Arbitration. It remained for Edward VII to repeat, if he could, his Paris success of 1903.

The King set out with a heavy heart. He knew that there were two spiritual difficulties which the good intentions of his Government could not overcome — the personality of the Kaiser and the inherent desire of the German ruling class, backed by a docile people, to dominate the world. If he could subdue the one and turn aside the other he would indeed deserve the title of Edward the Peacemaker! It is possible that if he had only had to cope with either one of these difficulties he would have succeeded. There were indications during this very visit to Berlin that his personality was as attractive to the Germans as it was to the French, and it might not have been very hard for him to persuade them that the British were their friends. For his own part he thought that they 'seemed to be very good people and quite reasonable'. But to subdue the personality of the Kaiser was twice as difficult.

On this, his last great journey of state, Edward VII was in poor health. February was his worst time, and his bronchial catarrh had again been severe. After inspecting a guard of honour at the German frontier station he had a choking fit in the train, to the alarm of Queen Alexandra, who had accompanied him only from a sense of duty, for Schleswig-Holstein was still written on her Danish heart. At Berlin the King's painful attempt to appear in good health and spirits contrasted sharply with the exuberance of the Kaiser, who had prepared a *coup-de-théâtre* in the announcement, on the station platform, of a Franco-German Convention, optimistically designed to solve all the difficulties of Morocco. This was the rocket which ushered in a visit full of the sparks and catherine-wheels of the Kaiser's oratory and the Kaiser's politics, the only peaceful interlude being a visit to the Rathaus at which he did not appear, since the municipality of Berlin was socialist and therefore deserving of rebuke. It was the *Bürgermeister* himself who remarked on a later occasion, when he was the guest of the King at Windsor, that one of the reasons why the Berliners disliked their Emperor was that he was too English, even in his dress. This was a surprise for the King, who had often had to drop hints about the Kaiser's fantastic clothing (as he said,

a sky-blue knickerbocker suit with a plumed Tiroler hat was not the most suitable wear for an English November), but it was a sure indication that the poison of Vicky's uneasy loyalties was still running in the veins of her son.

On that February morning at the Berlin Rathaus Edward VII made his last appearance as *le Roi Charmeur*. His official speech, delivered in the faultless German of the old days at Windsor, was gratifying to his hearers, but their real enthusiasm was reserved for his charming extempore address to the *Bürgermeister's* little daughter, who gave him a glass of Rhine wine in a golden goblet. It was what his mother would have called *gemüthlich*: the stout elderly King and the earnest little girl made up a tableau vastly appealing to the Germans, whose sentimentality about their own children is only equalled by their willingness to kill the young of other nations in time of war.

The other fêtes of the visit were less successful. At the Opera, where they were playing 'Sardanapalus', the King fell into an uneasy sleep, and, awaking as real flames were licking round the hero's funeral pyre, started up in momentary panic, thinking the theatre was on fire. The tact of the Empress Augusta shielded this incident from the audience, but it was seen by the Kaiser, whose scornful laughter was still ringing in the King's ears as he dragged himself to bed. The next day, after luncheon at the British Embassy, he had one of his terrible choking fits while conversing in an anteroom. The Queen and Princess Pless hastened to his side, and after an interval of great anxiety when the Princess actually thought he was dying, he was able to emerge and mingle with the general company, who were unaware of his seizure. It was with relief that the Queen accompanied him back to England. The visit had done no real good, although for some time after the Kaiser was enthusiastic about an Anglo-German alliance to save Europe from the Asiatic invaders whom he expected in the near future. Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter proposed that Britain and Germany should sign a convention pledging each to remain neutral while the other was at war with a third power; this suggestion, almost as naïve as the Treaty of Björkö, was of course rejected by Britain, for it was contrary to her understanding with France. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg succeeded Prince von Bülow in the Chancellorship, and great things were expected of his moderation, but his naval proposals were unacceptable to Britain

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because they were based on the principle that before any delay could be authorized in the German programme, much less any reduction in the fleet itself, Britain would have to sign a political agreement or neutrality convention with Germany, which document would of course be flourished under the nose of France as evidence of Britain's desertion of the Entente. The Foreign Secretary and all his department saw through the bluff, nor was the Cabinet in a mood to be deceived by it. All the attempts to establish cordial relations with Germany, begun by Joseph Chamberlain, continued by Haldane and loyally supported, though sometimes against his own judgment, by King Edward, had failed.

For the first time the King and his Cabinet admitted in public that there was a possibility of war with Germany. Most of the intelligent people in Britain had already realized that a dangerous future lay before them, and some of them even retained the touching faith that it could be averted by voting for this party or for that. Lunatics and females, however, were not admitted to have the right to vote, and this, accepted with calm by the lunatics, who realized that if the Kaiser was a sane man they were better off in Bedlam, had long been resented by the women. In 1867 the National Society for Women's Suffrage began an agitation by which they won, two years later, the right for women to vote in municipal elections. But thereafter the women's cause suffered a check, for no government would introduce a bill for the female parliamentary franchise, and the Queen herself was vehemently opposed to it. The mere report of a meeting on behalf of women's suffrage caused her to try 'to enlist every one who can speak or write to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of "Woman's Rights" with all its attendant horrors, on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety'. There is a charming paradox in the picture of the Queen, holding a tremendous office, wielding enormous power, and yet denying to members of her own sex the right to one-thousandth part of the work and influence which were hers. But with her usual naïveté she betrayed her chief reason. 'Where', she asked, 'would be the protection which man was intended to give the weaker sex?' This was the weapon with which she was accustomed to attack her Ministers: her feebler strength, her feebler nerves, the pathos of her widowhood were her favourite excuses for doing as she pleased. With such a weapon Florence Nightingale never

soiled the hands of her spirit: she encountered men on their own ground and asked no quarter, but her imitators went to the other extreme and developed a masculinity which only harmed their cause. The New Woman of his middle life was aesthetically displeasing to Edward VII. Like most extremely virile men he had formed in youth an image of what a woman should be; a dual image, of which one half was the good, the true and the beautiful, illustrated by the demure curls and sloping shoulders of the girl in the Cathedral at Speier; and the other half was the impudent and fascinating, illustrated by the long black gloves and sidelong glances of the Parisiennes whom Toulouse-Lautrec loved to paint. These images had nothing in common with a being in 'rational dress' taking exercise on a bicycle in Battersea Park and discussing municipal sewage with her male acquaintance. He had the Napoleonic conception of women as '*le délassement du guerrier*', and no opinion at all of their discretion, saying indulgently 'Once women begin talking — and I never knew any that did not — the profoundest secret becomes *le secret de Polichinelle!*' Such were the fruits of a ripe experience, but the women's movement flourished in spite of him.

Even the women of his own House were beginning to show their independence. More than one of his kinswomen refused to endure the unhappiness of a *mariage de convenance* and sought the remedy of divorce, which had been frowned on in Victorian days. Smoking by men had had the status of a secret vice at the time of his birth, but now society women were lighting cigarettes in public and tossing off liqueurs 'like stockbrokers', as one disgusted observer said. Ladies of leisure grew tired of the social round and took up careers, going in for the arts in an almost professional way: as late as 1908 King Edward, always avid for novelty, climbed several flights of Mayfair stairs to visit a lady of title who was said to affect boy's clothing and imitations of Miss Maud Allan's dancing. He came away chuckling, though somewhat perplexed, and remarked that he thought he was a bit of a Bohemian himself.

He was not so old-fashioned, of course, as to insist that all women should be mere favourites of the harem, or debarred from using their talents in the public service. The story of Scutari had made a lasting impression on him; but he resembled most of the public men of his own generation and the next by thinking that the proper public field for women was social reform, infant welfare, health and housing

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— but not foreign politics, not anything which could really affect the government of the country!

It was in 1903, the *annus mirabilis* of his successes on the Continent and in Ireland, that Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughters founded the Women's Social and Political Union in Manchester. After much endeavour they prevailed upon a sympathetic M.P. to raise the issue of 'Votes for Women' in the House of Commons, but those of their number who had hopefully sought admission to the Ladies' Gallery on the appointed day had the mortification of seeing the House 'talked out' on a Bill for highway illumination. This was the obstructionist technique invented by the Irish party, and now it was embellished by a hundred jests, some as brutal as they were pointless, at the expense of the Suffragettes. The W.S.P.U. rightly considered itself insulted, and from the time of the General Election of 1905, when Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were imprisoned after being ejected from a meeting in Manchester where they had demanded Votes for Women from the speaker, Sir Edward Grey, the suffrage movement became militant. It spread through Great Britain, and the 'mud march' of 1907, when women paraded London with their conventionally long skirts trailing in the mire, was only one of many demonstrations in the Parks and outside Parliament which were the prelude to arson, sabotage, imprisonments and hunger strikes. Of all this the King, like every other man in his kingdom, heartily disapproved. Even male suffragists deplored the methods of the 'shrieking sisterhood'. They said a woman who had chained herself to a Cabinet Minister's railings had lost her dignity and looked supremely silly. That was true, but the Minister, lurking behind his dining-room windows, looked 'silly too, especially if he was one who, as Mr. W. T. Stead might have hinted, had but scant control over the ladies of his household. When Mr. Asquith came to power his known disapproval of the suffrage movement brought a series of ingenious persecutions upon his distinguished head, especially as a Women's Franchise Bill had been talked out on its second reading two months before. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had supported this Bill and the King said he was disgusted with Sir Henry. But in 1908 he awarded his Order of Merit to Florence Nightingale — the only woman who has ever received it, and perhaps the only woman who has ever truly deserved it.

The great feminist movement did not achieve its aim until eight

years after the death of King Edward, and its history during the close of his reign was a painful antistrophe to the grave developments in the Parliament which the suffragettes desired to enter. They were a music-hall joke, and yet they were a burden on the public conscience, for it was not pleasant to thinking of Englishwomen being submitted to the rigours of forcible feeding in Holloway Gaol, and the suicide of one of their number, who died beneath the trampling hooves of race horses with the colours of the W.S.P.U. wrapped round her body, gave the scoffers pause. To die for a cause — it was what Englishmen were supposed to be glad to do on the field of battle: in that case it was glorious, in this it was disturbing. For some time afterwards the public, when it thought of racing, preferred not to think of suffragettes, but to conjure up the picture of the King, beaming with pleasure, leading in Minoru, the Derby winner of 1909, raising his hat to his delighted subjects and begging them not to come too near — they might get hurt. That was the national sport at its best.

CHAPTER IX

BUCKINGHAM PALACE, 1910

‘NEVER let the Army and Navy down so low as to be obliged to go to great expense in a hurry’, Queen Victoria had written thirty years earlier. In 1909 the Government found itself in precisely the situation which she had envisaged. Forced by public outcry as well as by their own convictions to bring the Navy up to a strength which should match Germany’s, they determined that if the people wanted dreadnoughts they should pay for them, nor did they pause in their zeal for any inconvenient recollection that their own early naval economies had largely contributed to the situation. The Chancellor of the Exchequer prepared a ‘People’s Budget’, so called because it taxed the Capital by which Labour lives, in which the increase of the income tax and the imposition of new licence, estate and legacy duties laid a heavy burden on the upper class. Another reason for the gratifying title of the ‘People’s Budget’ was that National Health Insurance was introduced for the working class, also a measure of that Old Age Pension legislation which has since been the favourite vote-catching device of demagogues.

Some years earlier, when the Old Age Pension was under discussion in Commission, the King had asked what it would cost the nation. It now appeared that in 1909-10 it would cost £8,000,000, while the increase of the Navy would cost £3,000,000; those increases, with the deficit of £1,000,000 from the previous budget, were the cause of the drastic taxation. That was how Mr. Asquith explained it to the King, who was seriously perturbed. He pointed out to the Premier that the income tax was generally regarded as a war tax, and in the event of war was bound to be increased further: which would be disastrous to landowners and to those whose unearned incomes, in the opinion of the King, were sufficiently highly taxed already.

But the exasperation of the landowners was precisely what Mr. Lloyd George hoped to provoke. He had not forgotten the defeat of the Education Bill in 1906 and was preparing to avenge it by a premeditated attack on the veto of the House of Lords. Let the Lords

spring to defend their rent-rolls, let them throw out the budget, and then let the people decide whether their elected representatives or the figure-heads of an effete aristocracy were to control the nation's revenues! Such were the simple but brilliant tactics of the Chancellor. The King, who perfectly understood them, made an attempt to circumvent Mr. Lloyd George by persuading the Conservatives to influence the Lords for their own good, but he very properly asked Mr. Asquith beforehand if the Prime Minister had any objection to his discussing the matter with the Opposition leaders. Mr. Asquith gave his approval and hastened from Balmoral to intercept Mr. Lloyd George at the railway station at Newcastle, where he was to speak, with the message that the King hoped to arrange everything if the Conservative peers were not provoked further. But the Chancellor had no intention of abandoning his plan of campaign to suit the King's 'arr-rrangements'. His Newcastle speech was one of the most sarcastic and infuriating of his campaign.

The House of Lords was crowded for the debate on the Budget, which had passed the House of Commons by a large majority on November 5th. The Lord Chancellor, in the name of the Government, argued that though the Lords had a legal right to reject a Finance Bill, centuries of precedent had deprived them of the moral right to do so. But the Lords were not interested in the ethical aspect of the debate. They were there to defend their privileges and had recruited all their supporters for that purpose, the Chamber being packed with the 'backwoodsmen' peers who had only crossed its threshold once or twice in all their peaceful rural lives. Lord Lansdowne's motion, that the House was not justified in giving its assent to the Finance Bill until it had been submitted to the judgment of the country, was carried by 350 votes to 75.

The Chancellor's provocative tactics had been successful, and a struggle now began between the two Houses of Parliament. The case of the Government was that the Lords were attempting to usurp the rights of the Commons, so clearly defined in the course of British history; the case of the Lords was that they were within their rights in forcing a Government which introduced such radical measures to submit them to the whole nation at a general election. The King's efforts to reconcile the two factions were in vain. His mother, who had been forced into one or two similar but less serious situations, had been more successful in mediation. The sense of the need for

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haste which haunted King Edward prevented him from exercising the patience which his mother's long and leisurely experience had given her. Within six months of his death Edward VII was in much the same mind as the young Victoria at the time of the Bedchamber Plot — possessed of a fixed idea and unable to reconcile himself with those in opposition.

He said that he had no objection to the Budget itself: it was the temper of its champions that rankled with him. The violence of Lloyd George's famous speech at Limehouse disgusted and alarmed him, and he was displeased with a speech delivered at Edinburgh by Mr. Churchill in which he threatened without authority that Parliament would be dissolved. But the dissolution was inevitable, and took place on December 15th. Every speech or event which brought it nearer also brought the King nearer to a momentous decision. For the Cabinet had by no means lost sight of the remedy which had been suggested in 1906 — the creation of enough Liberal peers to swamp the Conservative vote in the Lords.

To this, one of his greatest remaining prerogatives, the King clung tenaciously. He knew that to resign it into the hands of the Government was to resign it not only for himself but for his successors. The immense creation of over three hundred peers would be necessary, as the Budget vote had shown, to accomplish the end in view: to consent to it would be a reproach to the Crown even greater than the sale of knighthoods in the reign of James I. There was nothing to prevent its being repeated by a future Conservative Government until the Lords far outnumbered the Commons. The King felt that he must guard his heirs from such a situation, although in the moods of depression engendered by the controversy he was sometimes heard to say, 'My son may reign but my grandson never will'. Thoughts of abdication crossed his mind, but he could not put away the Crown which he had waited so long to wear.

At the General Election of January 1910, fought on the right of the House of Lords to reject a Finance Measure, the Government lost over eighty seats, and their new voting strength was almost exactly equal to that of the Conservatives. They could command forty-three Socialist votes, but to obtain a clear majority they had to have the support of the eighty-two Irish Nationalists, and the delighted Irishmen found themselves in the congenial position of being able to sell their votes to the highest bidder — to the party, that is, which

would give them Home Rule. Realizing that while the House of Lords exercised the veto they would inevitably use it to throw out a Home Rule Bill, they decided to support the Liberals and break the power of the Lords as a pleasantly destructive preliminary to breaking with Great Britain.

During the Election there had been rumours that Mr. Asquith had the King's 'guarantee' to create new peers if need be, but in January this had to be denied, for the King let it be known that he was not ready to make any such promise. He was in a cleft stick, for if he gave his consent to the mass creation he would offend the Conservatives and the entire aristocracy, and if he refused he would offend the Liberals and all the interests which they represented. And yet — dare he refuse? If his Government formally *advised him* to create new peers for the specific purpose of making law a Finance Bill which had been passed by the House of Commons and confirmed by implication at a General Election, could a constitutional sovereign reject their advice? That would be to induce a crisis even more serious than the existing one. It was a strange dilemma for the pupil of Albert and Stockmar.

There were those beside him who urged him to stand firm. Chief among them was Lord Esher, whose natural ability had been enhanced by the close study of Queen Victoria's relations with her Ministers which he had made while preparing her letters for publication, and he encouraged the King to stick to his prerogatives. Such advice was not unwelcome, for the King's fears of being coerced had redoubled, and he appreciated those who were heart and soul for him. Sir John Fisher, of whose truculent loyalty none could doubt, had now retired, and the King was moved to say that if Lady Londonderry and Walter Long thought they were going to run the country, with Charlie Beresford in the background, they would soon find out their mistake.

He was the King. He was clinging now to the idea of sovereignty as the Queen had clung to it, and in the fear that it might be impaired he snatched at Asquith's promise that he would not be asked to exercise his prerogative unless the conduct of the House of Lords should make it necessary. The Budget of 1909, having been rejected, had to be reintroduced in the new Parliament, and Asquith was determined to carry the Budget before debating the veto of the House of Lords.

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The King was at Windsor. He 'screwed himself up', in the words of Esher, to invite Mr. Asquith to visit him there to discuss the situation, and was confounded when the Prime Minister, contrary to all etiquette, refused the invitation because he was going abroad. He was 'done up', he said, but as Lord Roberts remarked 'Prime Ministers should not get done up', and the King was not soothed on receiving a letter from Mrs. Asquith expressing regret if her husband had offended the King, and volunteering to go to Windsor herself to explain and apologize. She received a brief reply from the King's secretary, saying that 'it would probably be better, if anything is said to the King on this subject, that it should come from the Prime Minister himself'.

Mr. Asquith was not the only one who was done up. Physically tired by the spring and depressed at the prospect of the great decision which lay before him, the King did not know that he was to be spared a final struggle with his Cabinet. Before he could receive their advice on the future of the Second Chamber, Edward VII had passed from the world of men, and his heir found that the task which devolved upon him was simplified by the Lords themselves, who after a year of ripe thinking decided to prevent the invasion of their hereditary order by assenting to the Bills put before them by the House of Commons.

In March the King left Britain on the last of all his visits to the Continent, and as on his first, fifty-four years earlier, he directed his steps to Paris. There he remained for two days before going on to Biarritz: two days like so many days spent in the beloved capital, with a visit to the President, a visit to a studio and two evenings at the theatre. It was the season of the 'false spring' in Paris, and the King, who was not to see the chestnuts of the Champs Elysées in flower again, saw instead the market women's stalls heaped high with violets and mimosa and breathed mild airs as he strolled on the boulevard. They were playing *Chantecler* at the Porte Saint Martin, he had to see that, and then *La Vierge Folle*, for he had always adored the French stage, but on one of these two nights the false spring betrayed him, and he caught a chill which developed at Biarritz into a severe bronchitis. He was still worried by the parliamentary situation, and complained of newspaper attacks on himself. The irrepressible Mr. Churchill, now Home Secretary, had made what the King called 'nebulous allusions to the Crown' in a speech at

Manchester on March 17th, which caused him to express the wish that Ministers would leave his name out of their speeches in future. Then there was Mr. Asquith, who informed him on April 13th that he was now determined that the necessary steps be taken to ensure that the policy approved by the House of Commons should be given statutory effect in Parliament. All this helped to retard his recovery, and he was less and less able to rise above his malady. In the same way had the Prince Consort succumbed to his.

Instead of a restorative holiday, his sojourn at Biarritz became a convalescence, and he had hours of enforced leisure to meditate, while the long Biscayan rollers broke upon the strand, on what the unimaginable touch of time had done to his aspirations. One-seventh part of his life had been given to the work he had always craved, and the six-sevenths which had gone before had been the barrier between him and complete success. His father's educational tyranny and his mother's withdrawal had driven him into the arms of amusing and acquiescent people, and the lack of the discipline which he should have got as a boy from other boys had made him in the long run unable to discipline himself. This was at the root of his self-indulgence, his abortive rages, and the constant struggle to assert his own authority.

But these less agreeable qualities leavened a nature which might otherwise have been endowed with a too facile charm. His subjects knew that the King was only human, but they found it no bad thing after living so long under a divinity. His rich humanity, which impelled him so often to a tussle for mastery with his Cabinet, was as much a factor in the development of the constitution as the tactics of his Ministers. During and after his reign it was impossible to think of the sovereign as an infallible being, but when that reign was over it was also impossible to think of the sovereign as an individual. The abdication of the grandson who, he had said, would never reign, a man who had enjoyed unparalleled personal popularity, was ample proof that it made no difference to the lieges whether Edward VIII or George VI wore the crown, so long as the crown was worn. Queen Victoria had been a remarkable interlude in the preceding sequence of Kings who did as they pleased and the succeeding sequence of Kings who did as they were advised, and the reign of Edward VII, the bridge between a spirited attempt at autocracy

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and a period of complete constitutional control, was to a large extent the continuation of his mother's reign.

There were, of course, marked differences in the situation of Britain in 1837 and 1910. She was now part of the continental system of alliances, and the friend of two nations whom she had treated with considerable reserve in 1837. She had driven a wedge into the Balkans, through the courts of Rumania and Bulgaria, to advance her new economic interests in the Near East. Still on good terms with Greece, as with the Scandinavian and Iberian states, she was on terms of mere formality with Italy, with whom, as a member of the Triple Alliance, she had no longer the same warm sympathy as in the days of Mazzini and Young Italy.

The most remarkable changes had been in her relations with America and Prussia. The United States had marched on from the Revolution through the tragedy of the Civil War into a period of enormous prosperity and influence, when friendship with Britain began to seem natural and desirable. The Prussian song had been changed from '*Der Landesvater*' which had been played at King Edward's christening feast to the Imperial strains of '*Die Wacht am Rhein*', and the British attitude had changed from patronage to mistrust. With Belgium, Britain was on exactly the same terms in 1910 as in 1837. The long estrangement between Edward VII and Leopold II, which had reacted on Anglo-Belgian relations, had ended with the death of the latter in December 1909, when on the accession of Albert I King Edward had given instructions for the resumption of cordial diplomatic terms in Brussels. So now all was as it had been in the days of the young Queen and her Uncle Leopold, a fact very important to the Belgians, who had never forgotten that Britain had guaranteed their frontiers.

The Imperial significance of the Crown had greatly developed in the reign of Edward VII. During the crisis of 1909 Mr. Balfour had expressed this very well. 'Our people overseas', he said, 'do not care a rush for Asquith or for me. They hardly know our names. For them the symbol of the Empire is the King.' The welding of the colonies had been completed by the travels of the King before his accession and dignified by the splendours of his court. In that, as in other directions, the reign of King Edward was a fitting pendant to the Victorian age.

After a stay of some weeks at Biarritz the King returned to London

at the end of April. The Queen was at Corfu, and he began to go through the ritual of the London season alone. A visit to Covent Garden, a stroll through the Royal Academy, a quiet dinner with Mrs. Keppel — his life seemed to have resumed its accustomed routine. But the effects of the bronchial attack at Biarritz were still lingering. Having gone to Sandringham on April 30th, he caught a fresh chill while inspecting the gardens, and on returning to Buckingham Palace he became seriously ill. Nevertheless he refused to keep his bed. Correct to the end, he insisted on dressing and installed himself at his desk. 'I shall work to the last', he said to those who remonstrated. 'Of what use is it to live if you cannot work?' But the work was interrupted by coughing fits and heart irregularity, and thus a day or two passed miserably enough.

The Prince of Wales was by his side, and on May 5th Queen Alexandra returned hastily from Corfu. For the first time he was unable to go to the station to meet her, and Londoners, hearing of this lapse from custom, had their first inkling of the gravity of his illness. The news reached the Kaiser, who instantly prepared to leave for England. The journey which these two men had made together, and by such dark roads, was almost over for one of them, and for the other was soon to lead to the battlefield and the land of exile. When the Kaiser saw his chosen enemy lying dead before him, he realized that a foe can leave a blank like a lover. One who watched him then recorded, 'My firm belief is that of all the royal visitors the only mourner was this extraordinary Kaiser'.

On the sixth of May the King insisted on rising to receive his old friend Sir Ernest Cassel. He sat in his frock-coat by the window and tried to smoke a cigar, but the taste had gone out of it. There was no taste left in anything, not in the magnificence of his palace, where sumptuous ceremony was soon to be a thing of the past, nor in the fresh green of the Mall, where his mother's memorial and the Admiralty Arch had risen since his infancy. There it was spread out before him, London in May, with all the changes which seventy years had brought, and he who had been the baby of a November morning was the dying man of a summer afternoon. The Prince of Wales entered quietly, and told him that Witch of the Air had come in first at Kempton Park, which made him smile, but then the world seemed to slip away from him, and when he regained consciousness he was in his great bed, and Queen Alexandra, holding

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Mrs. Keppel by the hand, was bending over him. 'I shall not give in,' he muttered, 'I shall go on. I shall work to the end.' But he saw in the faces of those around him that the end was come. His wife, his son, his friends were near him, his horse had won the race, and the summer night was falling over London. The death scene, that study in good form, was almost over. At a quarter before midnight the candles of mourning were lighted in Buckingham Palace, for the reign of Edward VII had ended, and the curtain had fallen for ever on the Victorian scene.

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